NICHOLAS THE WEAVER

MAUDE ROBINSON

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NICHOLAS THE WEAVER

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE TIME OF HER LIFE

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"An interesting and illuminative book coming straight from the Quaker atmosphere, illustrates abundantly the intellectual tone of much of the adult life, founded upon the educational cultivation of sense-observation, particularly in early botany and nature study. The absence of fairy tales among the Quakers has not led to lack of imagination."—*Times Educational Supplement.*

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"NOW TRY AGAIN," HE SAID

NICHOLAS THE WEAVER

AND OTHER QUAKER STORIES

By MAUDE ROBINSON

WITH ILLUSTRATION BY
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PREFACE

THE warm reception which has been given to my former book of Quaker stories has encouraged me to write a fresh series of sketches of life and character among the Society of Friends in its first two centuries.

As before, all are more or less founded on fact. The Yorkshire weaver who left the Roundhead army, and threw his uniform on to the bed canopy, is a tradition in my own family, and the little farmer's boy who put his spelling-book into the churn, and in maturer years labelled the elderly goose, was my grandfather, although the rest of his life was certainly not that of "Stephen Grey."

Some touching Minutes in the ancient records of the Sussex Quarterly Meeting of Friends suggested "Apprenticed by the Meeting" and "Poor Timatha," and in the latter case it seems right that the history of William Tuke's noble experiment in the humane treatment of the insane should be more widely known than it is.

"Transported" is founded on an incident in the life of Elizabeth Dudley, who, when visiting Newgate with Elizabeth Fry, found an old servant of her own among the prisoners.

The truest story of the series is the Irish one, "Harmless as Doves." Every incident told of Friends' suffering and bravery in that terrible time is recorded in contemporary accounts by a number of eye-witnesses. I have merely linked them together. This tale has been most kindly revised by several Irish Friends, as the one about "Poor Timatha" was by Dr. Bedford Pierce, the present head of the Retreat at York.

"A Poor Quaker Rabbit-Catcher" appears in the life of Hannah More, as the only person who showed the least sympathy in the desire of William Wilberforce and herself to Christianise heathen Cheddar. The dairymaid teachers, Flower and Patience, were also real characters at Shipham.

If these ten sketches of homely country lives in bygone days are not merely pleasant reading, but give to the present generation a fresh appreciation of things that are lovely, honest and of good report, a fresh hunger and thirst after practical righteousness, peace and goodwill to all, they will not have been written in vain.

MAUDE ROBINSON.

SADDLESCOMBE,
HASSOCKS, SUSSEX.

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NICHOLAS THE WEAVER

1660

"Coom on, Nick, laad!" The accent was of the broadest Yorkshire, although the narrow lane through which three soldiers in the uniform of the Roundhead army were travelling led through the dense forest district of North Sussex. They had missed their way, and twilight was falling as the two foremost reined in their horses to wait for their companion.

"T'owd mare is dead lame!" he shouted back. "I doubt if she will go much farther to-night."

"Then we must e'en camp in the forest and whistle for our suppers—eh, but there's a hut, we will ask if there is any inn near."

An old man was chopping firewood near the door, and after a few misunderstandings caused by the varied dialects, he informed them they were but a couple of miles from the village of Crawley, where at the "George and Dragon" they would find good cheer for man

and beast. It was a perfectly straight road, which they could not miss.

"We'll fare on then, Nick, and order supper, if you have to walk," said the better mounted men, perhaps glad to get away from a companion whose countenance showed the gloom of a man under a cloud. Left alone to plod on by his limping steed, he drew from his pocket a letter, which, after many weeks of wandering from his native town of Thirsk, had finally reached him just as he was leaving the garrison at Arundel. Laboriously he spelled out the crabbed writing.

DEAR BROTHER NICHOLAS,

So I must call you, having wedded your half-sister, my cousin Abigail. Since your mother died, she has been lonely and ailing, and as you did not seem inclined to return, my mother went to keep her company till I could make her my wife. So if you desire to stay in the army you had better do so, as the farm, as you know, belonged to her own mother, Ann Lambert, and is her rightful inheritance.

There were many expenses during your mother's long illness, so we have sold the two looms to a family who came from Bradford, and are weaving for all the country side.

Your sister sends her greetings.

JONAS LAMBERT.

"Poor Abbie!" muttered Nicholas, "'tis a hard fate to be at the beck and call of a sour,

avaricious lout like Jonas and his tyrannical old mother. 'Not seem inclined to return,' indeed! When I've been trying for years to escape from the army to look after her and mother! Poor mother! it was hard for her to die without her only child, but the sweet soul is at rest."

Over and over Nicholas read each item of the letter with ever increasing bitterness.

His stepsister, Abbie, was a plain, quiet woman of thirty-five, very simple, confiding, and easily influenced. To her stepmother she had always been loving and dutiful; her cousin Jonas, who was ten years her junior, had never given her a thought until the prolonged absence of her brother made it possible to seize on the whole of the small Pennifold inheritance on her behalf. The land certainly had belonged to the Lamberts, but with only a ruinous cottage, and it was the little fortune in ready money which Mary Postlethwaite brought to her husband which paid for the present comfortable dwelling and farm buildings; the father, John Pennifold, a skilful and successful weaver, had laid out all his savings in fencing and draining the little farm, buying cows and sheep to stock it and planting the excellent orchard. Abbie and Nick, with only three years between them,

had grown up in absolute harmony, with no thought of any difference from the fact that they were born of different mothers—for good Mary Pennifold loved Abbie as her own child.

When the parson had written a year ago of her death, Nicholas had no thought but to return and share with his sister the farm and the weaving industry. She had never seemed likely to marry, and now Jonas had beguiled her and taken it all! Keenly Nicholas felt the injustice; the letter had reached him as he was starting for Yorkshire, released at last by the breaking up of the Roundhead army at the return of the banished Stuart king. He would hasten northward now. Abbie he could not rescue from the bondage into which she had been betrayed, but Jonas should not grab all his father's hard-earned goods—he would have his share, calling in the help of lawyers to claim what was his own. So he brooded bitterly during his slow progress through the darkening woods. He had even taken the saddle-bags on to his own stalwart shoulders to relieve the suffering horse, and was glad to see the cheerful lights of the inn, standing in the middle of the village green surrounded by picturesque cottages.

The horse was stabled and fed, and the

three weary men went to rest, after considerably puzzling the host and hostess by the outlandish tongue in which they addressed each other, although Nicholas, who had seen service in many parts, could speak the more correct English with ease. The only son of a thoughtful Puritan father, he had, when almost a boy, espoused the cause which both believed would free England from kingly tyranny and Popery. Several times when hostilities ceased he had returned to Thirsk and worked at weaving and farming with steady industry.

The last time his leave had extended to a year, during which his father had died suddenly, so that it was a bitter trial to him, as well as his mother and sister, when the peremptory military order came that he must join the garrison at Arundel, in Sussex. He had been there before, as a mere lad, when Sir William Waller had battered the castle, which was held by the Royalists, with cannon placed on the tower of the parish church.

In the quiet months which had followed the surrender, Nick was fortunate enough to come under the influence of the fine character of the young Puritan officer, Sir William Springett. He, hating the enforced idleness of garrison life, occupied his clever mind and fingers by making models of useful machines,

trying various original plans for their improvement. A better and more easily-worked hand-loom was one of his plans, but being baffled as to its mechanism he had enquired if there were any practical weaver among the soldiers of the garrison, and Nicholas Pennifold, the intelligent young Yorkshireman, was sent to him. Together they worked, first at the loom, and afterwards at many more mechanical problems, and Nick soon felt the most enthusiastic admiration, not only of Sir William's skill in handicraft, but of his pure and enlightened Christian character.

Nick became his body-servant and constant companion, and chief nurse when the fatal spotted fever with which war revenges itself on its votaries seized him. A messenger was despatched to London for Lady Springett, and through winter storms and floods the brave young wife made her way to Arundel, in time to solace his last hours with her devoted love.

When about to return to London with her friend the doctor, she sent for Nicholas, who stood hat in hand before the fair girl, a mother and a widow before she was twenty.

"Sir William has often written to me of you," she said, "and told me what a help and comfort you have been to him. I wish

you to take all his tools, and when you use them, remember to be like him, industrious, kind and God-fearing. And now I want you to do one thing more—to see his body laid with his fathers at Ringmer Church. Your commanding officer has given leave for you to go."

Nicholas kissed the hand that was extended to him, and with tears promised to see that all due respect was shown to Sir William's memory. After Lady Springett had left Arundel, he rode beside the waggon which conveyed the coffin over the rough Sussex roads to the village church near Lewes, where Sir William's monument can be seen to this day.

That friendship had been a great uplift to the young Yorkshireman. The tools were his constant companions, and during the last three tedious years of garrison life they had helped to keep him from the vices which seem almost inevitable in military life—the alehouse, the gambling, and still worse temptations, which assail every idle soldier. He had fitted up a little workshop in a corner of the castle ruins, and filled his leisure hours with turning out many useful articles, from spinning-wheels to wooden and horn spoons and cups, which the townsfolk were glad to buy of him. His fellow-travellers would have been surprised to

know how many gold pieces were sewn into the belt concealed beneath his military uniform. He had planned to stop in York and buy the best of red cloaks for Abbie, and to lay out some of his savings in a new pillion and a really strong horse, on which they two would jog about together ; but his sister would ride behind her husband now, and none of Nick's hard-earned gold should go to buy finery for Jonas Lambert's wife !

Next morning, to the dismay of Nicholas, his white mare's near hind leg was swollen so much that she could hardly put her foot to the ground. She was a sorry jade at the best of times. The gay young officer who was off to join General Monk with such of his troop as were willing to accept the new regime had naturally kept the best horses for them, and had given the three Yorkshire Puritans, who insisted on their discharge, three steeds which were most unfit to start on a long journey. Delay was inevitable, while Nicholas burned to reach Thirsk and tell Jonas, whose character he knew too well, what he thought of him.

Would either of his companions change horses with him ? But no—Thomas had a little son whom he had never seen, and for Humphrey a patient Grizel had been waiting for years until he could leave the army and

settle down in the Wolds; these were prior claims to beginning a lawsuit.

Nicholas resolved to stay at Crawley a few days, and his not very congenial companions rode off northward. He attended to poor Poppet assiduously, bathing the swollen leg with cold water from the town well several times daily, and doing many a useful hand's turn for the busy host and hostess of the "George" between whiles.

Of an evening the more thoughtful men of Crawley were eager to hear all the soldier could tell them of the rapid changes which were taking place. Since the death of Oliver Cromwell there had been much unrest, and now the reins had fallen from his son Richard's weak hands. Would the new king keep to his plausible promises? Or would the weary civil strife, which for twenty years had blighted the nation, break out again? Nicholas could not tell. He himself was oppressed with a bitter sense of failure. He had given his best years of early manhood fighting for a cause he had fondly imagined would bring liberty and prosperity to England, but the pendulum of a fickle public had swung back to kingly rule, and Nicholas felt deeply the downfall of his hopes, and was at thirty-two a soured and disappointed man.

In the enforced idleness which was so irksome to him he wandered in the fields and woodlands about Crawley, with his solitary book—his father's Bible—and read much in the prophets, relishing their denunciations as applying alternately to Charles Stuart and Jonas Lambert.

On Sunday, as his mother had taught him, he attended the parish church, and found the pulpit occupied by one of the dreariest of Puritan preachers. No liturgy was used, but the service commenced with half an hour of extempore prayer, if such it could be called, when the minister seemed to think the Almighty much in need of enlightenment as to the condition and doctrines of the whole kingdom, with many long-winded denunciations of Antichrist and the Scarlet Woman. An equally dreary Psalm was sung while the preacher took breath, and then Nicholas braced himself to endurance of an hour and a half's discourse. It was all so utterly alien to his simple, straightforward nature, that he soon ceased to listen, and sat with his head thrown back staring at the church roof, still brooding bitterly on the injustice he had received.

It was a day of sudden storm and sunshine, and just then a gleam of unusual brightness shot through the south window and lit up some

quaint lettering on a cross-beam above him, where Nicholas read :

" Man yn wele bewar ; for warldly good makyth man blynde,
Bewar for whate comyth behynde."

The answer to his thought was startling. Was it really justice he was craving for, or the possession of property ? What would be the result if half the farm were proved by law to be his ? Jonas and Abbie would have no ready money to pay his share, and the obligation would be a never ending source of bitterness between them. And how would it affect Abbie ? If husband and brother were rivals in a lawsuit, she could not be equally loyal to both. Unsatisfactory as Jonas was, she was tied to him irrevocably, and with her meek and confiding nature would make the best of a bad bargain. After all, Abbie's happiness was more to him than money and abstract justice—he could always fend for himself—would it not be better to stay away and leave her in peace ? It was a sore disappointment to Nick, for ever since he had heard of his mother's death the Thirsk homestead and Abbie's companionship had been his goal. In his years of military life he had seen no woman whom he cared to make his wife, and now he

felt homeless and desolate. The old animosity to Jonas kept cropping up, but as Nicholas left the church he repeated over and over: "Bewar for what comyth behynde."

That evening he wandered into the forest, and under a giant beech he pulled out his Bible to change his thoughts. It opened not at his favourite prophets, but at the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and his eye fell on the words: "Brother goeth to law with brother. . . . There is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong?" Well, for Abbie's sake he would take it; and returning to the inn he procured paper and quill and resolved to write the letter before he could change his mind. He could not bring himself to address Jonas, and although Abbie could not read writing, the letter should be to her.

MY DEAR SISTER,

The news of your marriage reached me just when I was released from the army, and about to return to Thirsk, but as you have now another protector, I shall not come.

You know, if Jonas does not, that my own mothers' portion and our father's savings built the house and improved the farm, but you are my dear and only sister, and I freely give to you my share as a marriage portion. I only ask that you shall reserve for me my grandfather Postlethwaite's oak chest, his silver porringer

and the string of gold beads my mother had worn from a child.

I cannot tell you where I shall settle; if I live, you shall hear from me again.

That was as much as the trooper's unaccustomed fingers could accomplish, and with a groan he addressed it to:

Mistress Abigail Lambert, Thirsk.

Then he put it by to await one of the rare opportunities of sending letters northward.

Next morning he woke feeling like a ship which has slipped her anchor, as if he were drifting he knew not whither. Mechanically he went to attend to his horse, and found in the stable a shrewd-looking old countryman whom mine host of the "George" introduced as Master Tullet, from Charlwood, the most knowledgeable man about beasties' ailments in all the district. With the air of an oracle he stroked Poppet's swollen leg and pronounced that standing on the hard floor of a stable was the worst thing possible. A week or two on soft grass and the leg would be as sound as ever. He went on: "And I know who would like to take her in. Master Wilkinson up to th' old Manor House haven't half enough stock to bite down his good pastures, and the poor old chap has a broken arm. His horse

fell with him—stepped in a rabbit hole, he says—but he had been down to Slaugham Place, and Madam Covert's October ale is heady."

"Aye," said the host; "he hasn't been half the man since his only son fell in the Battle of Worcester, and his wife never held up her head after she heard the news, but faded away like."

"Hasn't he any daughters?" asked Nicholas, for he had been in the Battle of Worcester himself, and knew how many hopeful sons had been done to death there.

"Oh lor, yes! such as they are. One they call Henrietta after the French-born queen, and she tries to look like her, with her curls and her ear-droppers, the foolish trollope. T'other, Margery, is a good maid enough, but got her head turned with they mad Quakers. Why, I heard she would tramp all the way to Capil and Ryegate when their great preacher, George Fox, was in these parts. But you'd better take the mare to Manor House; Master Wilkinson won't charge you much for her keep."

"So I will, when I have finished the hen-coop I promised to make for the missus. She has got a fine brood hatching out, and nowhere to put 'em."

In the afternoon Nicholas led the limping Poppet along the broad grass side of the road that led northward from Crawley, until he saw, standing in a little paddock, an old house, built long ago for some country squire, but now fallen to decay. One wing was quite a ruin, but the other half had been patched up for an habitation.

Nicholas tied Poppet to a post, and made his way to the steps of a large pretentious hall door. It stood slightly ajar, and to his surprise he heard the sound which had been most familiar to him in his childhood—the rhythmic beat of a hand loom. It ceased at his rap at the great knocker, and a young woman of twenty-five came forward, her face crimson with exertion, her linen cap pushed back and her soft brown hair clinging to her brow, wet with perspiration. Quite breathlessly she asked his business.

"To see Master Wilkinson," he said.

"My father—he will be in for his supper directly, if thou wilt take a seat on the settle;" and she seated herself at the loom again.

Nicholas looked round with interest; the room had been the hall of the old mansion, and over the great open hearth was an elaborate chimney-piece, with several coats of arms painted in red and blue and gold on the dark

carved oak panels. It was now, evidently, the combined living room and workshop of the family, for on one side was a dresser, with homely pewter and wooden trenchers, and on the other two looms and quantities of linen yarn hanging in bunches on the wall. The girl was weaving with feverish haste, evidently with great bodily exertion, and in a few minutes she was startled by a strange voice beside her.

"See here, Mistress, that loom is out of gear; the cords of the treadles are far too short. Let me lengthen them, and you will not find it such hard work."

Margery Wilkinson looked round with surprise, but Nicholas had a trustworthy face in spite of the strangeness of his accent.

"Art thou a weaver?" she said.

"Aye, and the son of a weaver; used to the sound of looms in my Yorkshire home, I can hear yours is not working as it should."

Margery, with a sigh of relief, sank on the settle, while Nicholas with his big knife and clever hands worked at the loom, lengthening a cord here, tightening a brace there.

"Now try it again," he said; and the girl began throwing her shuttle industriously. After a few minutes she looked up gratefully.

"How can I thank thee? The loom does not

take half the strength to work it, and I was feeling quite worn out and discouraged before. My father has a large order for house linen; he was bringing home the yarn when his horse fell. It is for Madam Covert of Slaugham Place. With her daughters and her maids she keeps half a dozen spinning wheels always going. Father promised it should be done by Lammas, and then he broke his arm, and there is no one else in these parts who can use a loom but me."

"What! Gossiping there, girl?" said a harsh voice, as an old man, with his arm in a sling, came in at the back door. "Who's that a hindering you from getting on with your weft?"

"It is a weaver, father, who called to see thee on business, and has made this loom work better than it ever did before."

"Humph! it worked well enough for anyone but the lazybones," was the sour reply.

Margery flushed at the injustice, but only said cheerfully: "I shall get on with the weaving much faster now."

Here Nicholas began to explain his errand. The two men went out to look at Poppet, and Wilkinson readily agreed for a small sum to give her the run of a good pasture, to which they

led her, and left her indulging in a roll on the luxuriously thick grass.

Like others, the old man was eager for news, and as he and Nicholas walked back to the house he questioned closely as to the state of the country, then asked him to share their supper, and they sat together on the oak settle, while Margery still worked steadily at the loom.

Then in ran a girl—younger and prettier than Margery—with ringlets, ear-drops and cheap beads round her bare neck, copied from the great ladies of the neighbourhood.

"See, father, all these mushrooms that I have found in the Five Acres—and you are so fond of mushrooms. Come, Margery, and cook them for our supper."

"Leave Margery to her work—supper is your business!" growled the father.

"Oh, but I can't cook them—it gives me the vapours leaning over the hot coals. Come, Daddy, let her leave her loom for once."

"I will take the loom," said Nicholas, stepping to Margery's side. "Let me weave while you cook, Mistress."

Margery thanked him, and went to help her sister, who was beginning to peel the fresh white mushrooms.

Old Wilkinson stood by the loom, as the strong, well-practised arms worked far more

expeditiously than Margery could; then he sighed deeply.

"Ah, young man! I had a son who worked like that, but the cruel war robbed us of him, and now I have only the wenches, and I doubt if my old bones will ever mend so that I can throw a shuttle again, and I have done all the weaving for the gentry round here for many a long year."

"This is fine well-spun yarn," said Nicholas.

"Aye, 'tis so. Madam Covert is a rare hand at the wheel herself, and teacheth her maids. All grown on the place it is, and their old bailiff knows just how to soak and heckle flax. Do you know anything of damask weaving?"

"Oh aye—my father worked out some main pretty patterns and he taught me."

"That special parcel of fine yarn hanging there was to be made into table linen; 'tis what I have always prided myself on, and now my right hand is useless, and the girl can only do the plain sheeting, worse luck!" and the old man sat in moody silence till summoned to supper.

The savoury smell of mushrooms and rashers, fried by Margery in a pan with a yard long handle over the glowing wood coals, was appetising. The homely table was neatly

spread, the cloth and wooden trenchers were spotless, the home-made bread and cider of the best, and Etta had added a dish of honeycomb. It was years since Nicholas had sat at such a table. The coarse, ill-cooked garrison food, the rough fare accorded to private soldiers at the inns, had satisfied him, but the change was pleasant.

"These mushrooms mind me of those my sister used to cook for us," he said. "Many a morning have I run barefoot over the pastures after them, lest my shoes should be soaked with the heavy dew. They grow rarely in Yorkshire."

The meal passed pleasantly, and the shrewd old host noted that Nicholas showed many traits of a well brought up and honest man. He kept him chatting until twilight fell, and Nick rose to return to Crawley. Then he said suddenly:

"Look here, young man, that mare of yours will not be fit to travel for some time. What say you to earning an honest penny taking my place at the loom while you wait?"

"I'd like it well enough, Master. Idleness don't suit me, and I think I could manage that damask in a way you would like."

"Then come to-morrow and begin. We can

find you a bed, and you can take pot-luck with us."

Nicholas walked back to the inn by the light of the rising moon, lighter-hearted than he could have thought possible when he came to the village a week ago. The evil spirit of revenge and covetousness had been conquered by his letter to Abbie, and here was employment and a good home until he could decide what to do next. Early the following day he was back at the Manor House with his saddle-bags, and Margery took him at once up the broad oak staircase, and to his surprise ushered him into a large panelled room with a huge bedstead, the canopy, as well as the posts, of heavy oak.

"But, Mistress, you cannot mean me to sleep in so fine a room?"

"It is the only one we have to spare. It was my mother's; but since she died father prefers our poor brother Jack's little sleeping chamber. This bed is well aired. I have just put the bed-waggon into it."

"Bed-waggon? That is a new word to me—what is it?"

Margery lifted the heavy, homespun bed-clothes and revealed a wooden frame, in the centre of which was a pan of glowing charcoal.

"Every good house has one in Sussex," she said.

"I never saw the like in Yorkshire—it looks a bit dangerous, I must say!"

"Oh, it has never set us on fire yet!" said Margery, laughing.

Coming down, Nicholas went at once to the spare loom, and with the old man looking on approvingly, he soon had it set up for some of the damask patterns which he knew by heart. Early and late he toiled, while Margery did the same at the other loom, and old John Wilkinson acted as taskmaster to both. Etta attended to the housework and dairy, and tried at meals to draw the quiet Yorkshire man into chat; but he did not fancy her, and she soon pronounced him a dull oaf.

Of Margery he saw little. At the scanty times of leisure she did not stay in the hall, and on Sundays slipped away by herself before anyone else thought of starting for church. Etta and her father went to Crawley, as they had always done, but Nick had had enough of that preacher, and wandered across the great heath to Charlwood, only to find a still more dreary service. The second Sunday he tried Ifield church with the same result—empty words and long dissertations on doctrines which made no appeal to his mind—and it

was with a feeling of discouraged impatience that he took the short cut over the fields to the Manor House. To his surprise he overtook Margery.

"Why, I did not see you in Ifield church, Mistress!"

"No, I have not been there. Where there is a priest who preacheth for gain I cannot go to worship—the Gospel should be free."

"I never knew a parson who was not paid for his job," said Nicholas; "and a plenty of words they give us for their hire."

"There are no hireling priests among the Friends of Truth," said Margery. "They sit down in silence together till some message from the Lord is given to one or another."

"My word! but that's a new sort of Churching; but I am sick of the long tongues, and would fain find a better way. Where does this service take place, Mistress Margery?"

"In William Garton's great kitchen at Bonwicks Place," she said; "and I have just heard that next week a London Friend will be there who has a large gift in the ministry. Isaac Penington is his name. Would not thou like to be present?"

"But perhaps he will not feel moved to speak?"

"I don't think the Lord will send him here

without a message; but he is one who has suffered faithfully for the truth, and his very presence will help the meeting."

"Can I go with you then?"

Margery hesitated: "The meetings are open to all; but I generally walk with George and Jane Hogg of County Oak Farm, who could not come to-day; but thou canst easily find Bonwicks Place;" and in a few clear words she gave him directions.

The next Sunday Nicholas started betimes. Several people were standing near the garden gate of the large farm-house, and seeing him hesitate, a lady with a bright-eyed girl in her early teens beside her said gently: "It is not quite time for the meeting yet. William Garton has taken my husband to see a sick Friend near here."

A strange thrill of remembrance passed through Nicholas's mind. Where had he heard that sweet voice before? He looked at the lady earnestly, and she exclaimed: "Surely I am not mistaken? 'Yorkshire Nick,' I never heard thy true name."

"Nicholas Pennifold, so please your Ladyship," said Nick, with uncovered head and the lowest of bows. "Full well do I remember you at Arundel when I lost my good master, Sir William."

"Put on thy hat, my friend, and call me plain Mary Penington. Here, Guli child, come and shake hands with one who served thy own dear father well. This maid was sent to comfort me in my sorrow, for my boy soon went to join the father who loved him. But Guli has a second father in my dear husband, Isaac Penington, and she is a kind elder sister to our three little rogues at home."

Guli, with a pretty graciousness, laid her little hand in the toilworn one of the weaver, and he noted the bright brown eyes, so exactly like those he remembered as Sir William Springett's.

"Hast thou been much among the Friends of Truth?" asked the lady, noticing that he still wore the threadbare but well-kept uniform of the Roundhead army.

"I have never been at a meeting, my Lady (Nick's tongue could not take the fearful liberty of 'Mary Penington'!); but I would fain worship God on Sundays, and in all the churches round here the ministers drone their doctrines until I am weary and sick at heart."

"Ah! so my husband and I felt, until we found liberty in waiting on the Lord in silence for His own teaching. Come in with me now, for I see our Friends returning."

The large kitchen, with its huge chimney corner, furnished with its own tiny lattice window, had evidently been fitted up for meetings, for a fixed seat was round the oaken, panelled wall. The centre was filled with low forms without backs. Already some two score of country folk were seated, and Nicholas made for the darkest corner. Soon Margery came in with the Hoggs, whom Nick knew by sight, followed by William Garton, a sturdy yeoman in homespun garb, and the refined, frail-looking Isaac Penington, in the plain though handsome suit befitting the son of a London Alderman.

To Nicholas, the absolute silence into which the assembly fell was almost fearful. A thrush, singing loudly on a cherry-tree without, was the only sound. He glanced at Margery. Her eyes were closed, and an expression of deepest peace and rest made her look very unlike the weary, harassed weaver whom he had first seen. Other faces, including Mary Penington's, bore the same stamp, and slowly Nicholas realised that to them there was a Presence in the midst unknown to him.

Awestruck, he bent his head, and hardly knew how time passed till Susanna Garton, a silver-haired, motherly farm-wife, knelt and prayed in a few quiet words for God's blessing

on their meeting together. Here was something new! A woman praying in public! It gave Nick a shock as something almost indecorous—yet his own Puritan mother used occasionally to pray with him and Abbie. Why not when more were gathered as one family before their Father's Mercy Seat?

Presently Isaac Penington arose, all listening breathlessly, and although he spoke for nearly an hour, Nick never thought of comparing it with the wordy discourses which had tried him at church. As water is to a thirsty soul, his clear message of personal salvation through Jesus Christ, of the promised Guide and Comforter, of the privilege of a life in God's service, came to the young weaver. He spoke of the state of the country and of the utter failure of the bloodshed and military rule of the past twenty years to help to a better state of things in the land, and of the more excellent way of living in that spirit which takes away the occasion of all wars.

When the preacher ceased, Nick's head was bowed in his hands, and great tears fell on the flagstones at his feet. Mary Penington watched him with fervent prayer for one who had been "tenderly reached," but when the meeting closed he strode away, speaking to no one.

All that summer afternoon he lay upon his face in the thickest wood he knew, his very soul stirred to its depths with his new-found treasure of faith and hope. He was very quiet at the supper table, and went early to bed. Taking off the uniform of which he had once been so proud, he looked at it grimly. To him now it seemed the symbol of cruelty, violence, and ill-will to men.

"Thou and I must part company," he said, and folding the clothes together, he threw them on the tester of the bedstead out of sight.

That week was a very busy one. The year before had been a good flax season, and all the housewives were sending in their yarn, particularly as the fame of the new damask patterns spread abroad. Margery was more shy than ever, and not a word passed about the meeting; but Nicholas sought out George Hogg, and found from him that the Peningtons would be at a meeting at George Bax's house at Capel on the following Sunday. The grey mare was quite sound now, and in his rough working suit, which he had had no opportunity to replace, Nicholas rode through the lanes until he found the farm-house.

After another most refreshing meeting, he opened his heart to Isaac and Mary Penington, who rejoiced greatly that the soldier of the

Commonwealth had become the soldier of the Prince of Peace. The local Friends gave him a warm welcome, lent him books (although he never developed a taste for the religious controversy so fashionable at that epoch), and helped him in his new way of life with brotherly kindness.

Nicholas soon decided to make Crawley his home, for there was abundant work at his trade, since, as John Wilkinson had foreseen, his right arm was never again fit to throw a shuttle. He learned to lean on the young man as a son, and when Nicholas persuaded Margery to allow him to become one in truth, the old father rejoiced, and never complained that they belonged to the persecuted and despised Society of Friends.

APPRENTICED BY THE MEETING

1710

"A London letter for you, Master King, and one and ninepence to pay." The postman on a tired nag, laden with well-filled saddle-bags, stopped at the gate of a farmyard, into which a sturdy yeoman was driving a dozen fine cows.

"That's a high price for a letter; I hope it will prove worth it. Here is the money, and a good day to thee."

Farmer King carefully broke the seal, and unfolded the large sheet of paper; but although reputed a good scholar, and Clerk of his Monthly Meeting, his unpractised eyes were slow to make out the meaning.

Just then there came along the road a woman, tall and active, carrying a huge basket full of wild herbs—horehound, centaury, ground ivy and eyebright, tied into neat bundles with green rushes.

"Ah, Friend Peggy, thou art come just at the right time; here is a London letter on Meeting business, in such crabbed writing

I can't make it out. Canst thou come in to supper with us?"

"Nay, Friend King, I have been out all day herbing, and must get on home; but give me the letter and I'll sit on this log and rest my arm while I read it—that basket is heavy."

Margaret Ord was of a studious nature, and, living alone, had more time for reading and writing than most of her neighbours. She easily read aloud:

RESPECTED FRIEND,

John and Catherine Crocombe removed from your Monthly Meeting to London six years ago. They have regularly attended meetings, and have been well esteemed among us, but we find their certificates of removal have never been sent, so they continued your members. I grieve to tell thee that a month ago they both died of fever within a few days, and were buried in Bunhill Fields, and their two children have been left quite unprovided for. Friends sold the little stock in John's shop and the furniture to pay the funeral expenses and the children's board with Ann Stokes, who took care of them, but that is nearly gone, and we propose to send them down by the carrier's waggon next 7th day to Burgate for your Monthly Meeting to take charge of. The girl is eleven—the boy seven years of age.

Thy Friend in ye Truth,
BENJAMIN HOW.

As Margaret finished, the farmer's lips pursed up into a long and un-Quakerly whistle, and his face showed some consternation.

"More orphans! and at last Quarterly Meeting Friends were complaining of the great cost of keeping Ben Rickman's children at the Workhouse at Clerkenwell. The Treasurer can never find money to send these poor little ones there for their education, with so many aged and feeble to help as we have just now. Thou knewest the Crocombes better than I. Have they any relations who could help?"

"I think not. John Crocombe, thou knowest, was a foreigner from Devonshire, and Kitty Lee's folks did not quite like her marrying him, although he was a good steady lad, and her brothers were nothing to boast of. Charles was a wild one, and he is dead, poor fellow, and Edward has a large family, and such a shrew of a wife, I should pity any child sent to them. No, the only thing is for Friends to apprentice them, as they kindly did me, when my parents died twenty-five years ago. They gave £10 to Dame Ballard to take me, and she was a good mistress, although not one of our own people."

"Well, well! we must do our best for the poor children. My good missus, I am sure, will take them in for a week or two. She says one more don't make much difference at such a full table as ours, but with

nine children of our own to do for we cannot undertake more. I should not wonder if James Hogg would take the boy; he was saying his Marcus is getting too big to spend his time herding their cows, and must be put steadily to weaving soon."

"Herding cows on the big common is a rough, idle life," said Margaret doubtfully.

"Beggars can't be choosers, Peggy. There are not many ways a little lad of seven can earn his bread, and the Hoggs would be kind to him. Dost thou know anyone who would take the girl?"

"No—o," said Margaret doubtfully, picking up her basket of herbs. "If thou finds them at Bargate, we shall see them at Meeting on First-day. Poor children! they have lost good parents in John and Kitty Crocombe. Farewell, Friend King." She moved away, while the farmer returned to his cows.

On the outskirts of a large village she turned in at the gate of a substantial thatched cottage. In front were gay flower beds, but the garden, of over an acre in extent, which surrounded it was laid out in an unusual fashion. In addition to the vegetables were large beds of blue lavender, mint, and sage; elecampane, with its broad green leaves and sunflower-like blossom; a perfect mass of

low rose-bushes of the fragrant Damask and Double Velvet kinds, and beyond a sheet of sky-blue flax in full flower.

An elderly man was patiently weeding in the herb beds, and Margaret, when she had put down her basket, cut a substantial meal of bread and cheese, and took it with a mug of cider to her henchman, who silently smiled and pulled his forelock as she gave it to him, for he was deaf and dumb. In a remote Sussex village in the eighteenth century there was no education for such, and it was only by old Job's native intelligence and Margaret's patient kindness that she had trained him to be an effectual helper in her herb garden.

She sat down to her solitary supper in a little sunny parlour, the large kitchen being full of drying herbs, and the still with which she skilfully reduced their savours to essences. The thought of her old friend Kitty Lee's little daughter needing a home haunted her. Ought she to offer to take her? But Margaret Ord had lived alone for so long, that the thought of any human companionship constantly in her house was distasteful to her. Left an orphan at ten years old, she had been apprenticed by Friends to Dame Ballard, whose daughter had just married, and who needed a helper in her herb business.

The Dame had a great reputation for medicine, salves, and ointments, and it was even hinted that she was a "wise woman" who dealt in "charms" as well as her more legitimate calling. She had no need to repent her bargain, for Peggy the 'prentice grew up unusually active in mind and body, and whatever she turned her hand to appeared to flourish. Since Dame Ballard's death she had saved enough to buy the holding of her heirs, and was much respected in the village as a kindly neighbour and a consistent Friend. Many marvelled that so capable a woman remained a spinster, but Margaret was faithful to the love of her youth, Humphrey Williams, who, soon after their betrothal, fell into consumption, and after months of patient suffering passed away. His had been a sweet, spiritual mind in a frail body, and many and precious were the lessons Margaret learned from him, softening a character which might have been too hard and business-like, and giving her a firm belief in the greater importance of the unseen and eternal compared with the seen and temporal things of this life.

She had nursed Dame Ballard tenderly to her death, and since had lived alone, helped only in her business by the silent old Job.

As she moved about the garden in the summer evening, gathering the fragrant petals of the roses, which had bloomed during the day, for her rose-water (which had quite a local celebrity), the conviction pressed more and more upon her that she ought to share her pleasant home and prosperity with the orphan. An industrious child would be a great help in the lighter tasks of her trade, and the little low room next her own could easily be fitted up for her. But suppose she were a pert city minx? Or rough, careless and noisy, among her dainty methodical plans of life? Tired as she was after her long day's ramble after herbs, it was long before Margaret could sleep that night. Earnestly she prayed for guidance, and felt she must leave it until she saw the child.

On the following Sunday she walked across the fields to the old stone Meeting House, taking her seat at once as her custom was, and closing her eyes in devout meditation. The congregation gathered around her, and after a while she looked up suddenly and met the eyes of a stranger child seated at right angles to her—eyes so large, so dark, so earnest in their gaze, that Margaret was quite startled. As if convicted of staring, the child's little pale face coloured crimson, and

she drooped her head on the sleek dark one of her little brother who leaned against her shoulder.

Among the group of rosy, flaxen-haired, purely Saxon children of good John King, these descendants of Phœnician immigrants of the West Country looked strange indeed. Both were thin and pale and timid-looking, and Margaret's heart gave a motherly throb, as in the silence of the meeting there came a profound conviction that it was her duty to take the orphan maiden and cherish her as a daughter.

When meeting broke up she spoke kindly to the child. "So thou art my old friend Kitty's daughter! Is thy name Kitty too, my dear?"

"No," said the child timidly; "I am Loveday Crocombe, and this is my little brother, Josiah."

"Loveday! That is a new name to me. I suppose Josiah was called after thy mother's father?"

"Yes, and I was called after grandmother Crocombe, down in Devonshire," said the child.

"Well, you must come and see me some time and taste some of my new honey," said Margaret kindly; "Patty King shall

bring you, I will ask her mother to let you come."

Walking on with John and Martha King, she questioned them about the London children. "The quietest little old-fashioned pair I ever did see," said their hostess. "I fear they have had rough times since their parents died, they look so scared and daunted. They only seem to want to sit in a corner close together, and they hardly ate enough for a couple of sparrows at supper last night. I will keep them till after the Monthly Meeting, and try and feed them up a bit."

"Send them with Patty to supper with me to-morrow," said Margaret. "I should like to know my friend Kitty's children."

In due time the guests arrived, very shy and silent, but perfectly well-behaved. Margaret took them round the garden and showed them the long row of beehives, and was well pleased to notice that Loveday stood entranced with admiration in the middle of the rose-bed, while Josiah ran off with Patty to watch some lambs which were jumping and racing in an adjoining field.

At supper the sweet fresh honeycomb was a complete novelty, and Margaret spread it liberally on slices of bread. When Josiah had finished his, she offered a second slice.

The boy coloured, and his eyes sought his sister, who gave an almost imperceptible shake of the head, and he docilely replied: "No, I thank thee."

"Come, I think a little boy can eat another slice," said the hostess cheerfully; "or does thy sister think honey is not good for thee? Dost thou have to be careful what thy little brother eats?" she added to Loveday.

The girl looked embarrassed. "No, thank thee, Josiah is quite well—but I think we had better not have any more."

"But why not? Here is your friend Patty quite ready for another slice. Canst thou not tell me, my dear?"

Loveday looked down, and said in a low voice: "Ann Stokes said eating heartily is a bad habit, and that orphans should take as little as possible till they can earn their own bread."

Margaret's heart swelled with indignation, but she only said gently: "Things may be different in London, but here all our friends like to see growing children eat their fill of plain, wholesome victuals, and it is a real pleasure to me to share a meal with my old friend's children."

After this, not only Josiah, but Loveday herself, joyfully accepted another goodly

portion of the honey and bread, and even added to their prim thanks: "We never tasted anything so nice!"

John King lost no time in finding out if James Hogg, the weaver, would take a seven-year-old apprentice. "The little lad is sober and biddable, and although he hardly knows a cow's head from her tail, if he went out with Marcus for a few weeks he would learn his duty. He can already read, and you would see that he does not forget it."

"Oh yes, my own children always read a chapter on First-day, and on wet evenings. If Friends would give £10 just to pay for his shoe-leather till he is worth more, I think we could do well by him. But there is one thing more: if he should have the small-pox while with us, would Friends pay the charges?"

"Oh yes, that was entered in the indentures of the last lad the Quarterly Meeting bound apprentice. I will arrange it when we meet at Steyning next week."

Margaret Ord also entrusted John King with a letter, offering to take the girl, and in the ancient book which has come down from the early eighteenth century we find this minute recorded:

"Loveday Crocombe is apprenticed to Margaret Ord. She, having been herself apprenticed for £10, in grateful

sense of Friends' love, and the blessing from God upon her industry, took Loveday Crocombe free. This good example is worthy of imitation of all good people."

This matter settled, the children were taken to their respective new homes. It was a trial to be separated, but it was only by a single mile, and they knew that frequent meetings were possible. Loveday was delighted to find that her lot was to be cast in the rose garden, and confided to her contemporary, Patty, that she had thought Margaret Ord had such a kind face the first time she saw her in meeting, that she had prayed that Friend might be her future mistress. "Father told me the Lord would answer even a child's prayer, and you see He *did*, Patty," she whispered reverently.

It must be confessed that to have a young inmate in the thatched cottage was at first a trial to its owner, but she laughed at herself for having settled into such old-maidish ways, and resolutely put aside her own likings. At first she could not remember the "outlandish name" of Loveday, and called her apprentice "child," or sometimes "Kitty," but this passed after two travelling ministers had had a "Family sitting" with the mistress and her little maid. One of them, after kind encouragement to her who had made a

home for the orphan, went on: "And thou, little one, must always follow the Light, and love it more than darkness. Thy name is Loveday—see that thou in all things loves and follows the Dayspring from on high Who has visited us."

After this Margaret felt she was giving a reminder whenever she used the name.

Happily, Loveday was naturally industrious, and at first very quiet. She took kindly to her easy task of picking rose-leaves and lavender, and turning over the drying herbs, and when, as years went by, good food and country air developed her into a strong rosy maiden, her mistress loved to hear her cheery voice and quick movements about the house and garden. She possessed a good share of natural ability, and had soon mastered the elements of the crafts which Margaret had carried on successfully alone, and she readily served the customers, when Dame Holden came for peppermint essence for her spasms, or Farmer Ford's gay young daughters for elderflower-water, which they fondly believed would remove the tan of the summer sun from their faces.

Margaret had inherited from Dame Ballard a parchment-covered book, in which were some two hundred elaborate recipes, written

out in the neatest hands, with the quaintest spelling, by some wise women of long ago. To her Dame Ballard's book was of the nature of an oracle, and it had never occurred to her to question the elaborate recipes which she had worked out as a girl under her mistress's guidance. But Loveday had a more critical nature, and perhaps more common-sense, and as she grew older she began to question the wisdom of the ancient book.

"I don't know what I shall do, child," said Margaret one day; "here is Dame Kidd wanting another bottle of Dr. Steven's Histerical Water that cured her Lucy of the vapours last year"; and she read out: "'Take a gallon of Gascony wine, and of lavender, pennyroyal, camomile, pellitory of the wall, wild marjoram, wild thyme, and other thyme, spearmint, wormwood, rosemary, sage, of each of these a handful, and of grains, gallingale, cardamom, nutmegs and cloves, mace, cinnamon, ginger, of each one dram. Bruise the spices, and steep together twelve hours, and then still it.' How can we make it," she went on anxiously, "when the masons scraped out every bit of pellitory when they repaired the church wall last year? And wild marjoram—even if we had time to go to the chalk hills, I doubt if we should find wild

marjoram so late in the year—and the apothecary in the town told me he does not know where to get a bit of gallingale nowadays."

Loveday laughed merrily. "Why not use tame marjoram, dear mistress? There is plenty of that in the garden; it looks and smells just the same, and make the medicine without the other things. Surely seventeen ingredients will do as well as nineteen?"

"It does not seem honest to alter a proved recipe," said Margaret doubtfully.

"Lucy Kidd got better, but how can we know that it was the pellitory and gallingale that cured her? Very likely it was the lavender and cinnamon! I often think that the physic we make is needlessly elaborate. And why are folks so fond of physic? I believe if they were more careful of their food and drink they would not have so many pains. Thou said thyself when Farmer Steel's spoilt boy would not take his physic that a couple of roast apples taken fasting would do him as much good. Thou and I don't take the medicines we sell to other people!"

Margaret laughed. "We are both strong and hearty, Loveday my dear, but when others are not so, they come for the physic which they find does them good."

"I believe that some things we make *are* very good," said Loveday: "the peppermint and camomile, and the horehound, for those who have coughs; but those queer old recipes seem made up without common sense. When thou paid the village boys to bring us all those poor little swallows from the nest to make ointment last year, I felt sure that the rosemary and lavender and May butter, rubbed in warm, would have done Gaffer Hobden's rheumatics just as much good without sacrificing the poor little birds; and there are other recipes in thy book that are downright nasty, although thou may feel it is treason to Dame Ballard's memory to say so."

Margaret slowly turned over the leaves of the cherished volume. "Well, child," she said, "there are certainly some here that I should never give to anyone. But most of them I have made for many a year, and customers were satisfied, and the Lord's blessing seemed to rest on my industry. I do not mind telling thee, Loveday, that I never could bring myself to try some of Dame Ballard's remedies. She used to profess to cure warts by saying words over a certain number of peas, which the sufferer from warts was to throw down the well, with

great secrecy; that was a 'charm,' not a remedy, and too much of a witch's way for me. I have always found that elder-leaves rubbed on fresh night and morning will cure warts in time."

"Dame Gander has had bottle after bottle of the Greater Palsey water," went on Loveday. "The hours I have spent in collecting the ten kinds of flowers for thee to distil! But the poor old lady lieth as helpless as ever, it has done her no real good."

"Dost thou think, then, my dear, that it is our duty to give up making medicines in which our neighbours heartily believe and are willing to pay for?"

"Is it not making gain out of their ignorance? Now it is a comfort to Dame Gander to have something to take. Should we not make her some simple, comforting drink, instead of this recipe, which promises so much and does so little?"

"Could we make a living without these medicines?" said Margaret anxiously, for she had come to have the greatest confidence in the judgment of Loveday, who was now a sensible young woman of twenty.

"Oh dear yes," said she, laughing. "Think of the hours and days I have spent finding wild herbs and preparing these

ingredients. I will never, never pound dried toads in the old stone mortar again! I'm sure wounds would mend better with clean wet rags, or plain hogs' lard. Instead, we will make lots of horehound candy, and that roseleaf conserve that old Squire Daintree liked so much. We will still plenty of peppermint and lavender water, and dry sage and thyme for winter cookery. Never fear, mistress, if this is the honest path to take, we shall not lack bread or butter either. There is always the flax field and the spinning to fall back on."

Hardly convinced, Margaret put away her cherished book with a sigh; but Loveday set to work on the new lines with energy, and soon proved that honest trade was better than the manufacture of medicines with a score of doubtful ingredients.

Loveday's scanty leisure was spent in mending and making for her brother Josiah. She spun and knitted excellent stockings for him of the locks of wool he collected from the brambles during his long days on the common, dyeing the yarn with some simple herb dye known to Margaret Ord.

He became in time one of those useful villagers of the olden time, half weaver, half husbandman, of excellent character and a

credit to the teaching of those who were willing to take an apprentice of seven years old.

Margaret Ord lived to be called "Grannie" by Loveday's children, and in her old age often spoke with thankfulness of the day that she put aside her own inclination and made a home for the orphan child.

THE STORY OF A SAMPLER

1755

It was a tremendous event in eleven-year-old Mollie's life when Uncle and Aunt Rickman not only invited her for a month's visit, but fetched her themselves in a wonderful, new-fashioned, one-horse chaise.

At her farm-house home Mollie was used to a drab-painted spring cart, in which the family jogged to Meeting, drawn by an old white horse, who spent six days of the week before the plough. But Uncle Rickman's chaise was drawn by a handsome young, high-strung mare, named Brown Dinah, whose plunges at starting fairly brought the little visitor's heart into her mouth. But Aunt Becky's kind arm was round her, and once on the high road they bowled along at a surprising pace—full ten miles an hour—which was most exhilarating.

Mollie had never been six miles from home before, and to go twenty-five at once, through shady Surrey and Sussex lanes, over wide commons with tall windmills, and by many

farms and cottages, where the orchards were full of rosy apples and yellow quinces, was a wonderful new experience.

When they reached their destination at Barcombe Mill, the river looked tremendous to her childish eyes, and she was never tired of watching the broad, mossy, wooden wheel, which went creaking round and round as the clear water poured on it from above, while within the mill the grinding-stones were surrounded by a cloud of sweet-smelling dust, as the golden wheat was converted into fine white flour. To buy this wheat, and sell the flour, Uncle Rickman had to make journeys to country markets, and his way of showing kindness to his young guest was to take Mollie with him for the long drives. He did not know much about little girls, and never having felt fear in his life, had no idea of her terror when Dinah reared and plunged, or shied at ugly objects in the road. If Aunt Becky was in the chaise, Mollie did not mind, but she could not always go, and the child was too shy to decline the dreaded kindness of a drive.

One day Uncle Rickman had offered to take her to Lewes. The chaise was brought round, uncle took the reins, and the groom returned to the stable out of sight, when uncle exclaimed in a vexed tone: "There,

I have forgotten my pocket-book! Just stand by Dinah's head, Mollie, while I find it."

"Oh, uncle, I am afraid!"

"Thou little goose! surely thou art used to hold father's horse? Just catch hold of the bridle, and she will stand for a minute quite well."

Unwillingly Mollie took the bridle, and stood timidly patting the horse's glossy neck, inwardly quaking as she snorted and fidgetted. Then, oh, horror!—a great black dog suddenly bounded into sight, barking loudly! Startled Dinah pranced and backed till the wheel of the chaise was within a foot of the edge of the wharf where the barges were unloaded, and where Mollie knew the water was deep enough to drown the horse. With one desperate prayer—"Help me to save Dinah!"—Mollie threw her whole weight on the bit with a sudden jerk, turning the wheel away from the dangerous edge; but as Dinah plunged and reared she was thrown down, the cruel iron-shod hoof descended on her leg, and the poor child screamed and fainted away just as the strong hand of Squire Pelham, the owner of the dog, seized the horse, and drew her into a safe place close to the mill wall, sternly silencing his noisy dog.

Out rushed Uncle Rickman and raised the

unconscious child, bitterly reproaching himself for having left her.

"I don't know who that little maid is, Rickman," said the Squire, "but she is a heroine. Your fine mare would have been in the river, chaise and all, if she had not done the only thing possible—jerked her sharp to the left. I blame myself, for I ought to have kept that noisy pup of mine in better order—it was he that did the mischief."

Here the groom appeared, and the two men carried Mollie to her aunt, who applied remedies which soon brought her round, with a sobbing moan, "Oh, my leg, my leg!"

Tenderly the Squire felt it. "The bone is broken," he said. "Keep her quite still while you drive that fast mare to Lewes for the doctor to set it properly."

Poor Mollie! the setting of the leg was a painful business, for the hands of the country doctor in the eighteenth century were rough and untrained. But young bones soon join, and in a couple of weeks she was carried down to sit in the great armchair, with the lame leg carefully propped on another. It was a dull time for the active child, and amusements were few. She read and re-read Aunt Becky's favourite book, "*The History of Thomas Ellwood*," and did some plain sewing; but

uncle's wristbands to stitch were not very interesting, and she was sitting pale and languid when one day Squire Pelham appeared with a parcel.

"Here, little woman, I asked my own little maid what *she* would like if she had a broken leg, and she said, 'A sampler and silks,' so I drove her to Lewes, and she chose these for you."

Mollie's pale cheeks became rosy with delight. She had often longed for just such things, but mother could not spare the money, and here was a square of fine woollen canvas, and many skeins of bright silks: pink, green, yellow, purple, and a paper pattern with different letters printed on squares that she could count. She launched at once into copying Thomas Ellwood's poem:

> "Oh, that mine eyes might closéd be
> To what becomes me not to see,"

and worked straight on, letter by letter, quite regardless of "spacing" or arrangement, until the eighteen lines were finished.

Then followed a verse which her mother, Mary Martin, had worked on her own sampler in 1719, beginning, "Count what's more sweet and fairer than a flower."

"There is still room for two more lines, Aunt Becky, before I put my name and the

date. Dost thou know something really good for me to work there?"

"Yes, dear little one," said the gentle aunt, "I would have thee work this:

"The loss of health is much,
The loss of life is more;
But the loss of Jesus Christ is such
That no man can restore."

Carefully in neat small letters the addition was made, and then "Mary Dann ended this work, Sep. 29th, 1755," was worked below, and by way of ornament some rows of green and red objects intended for flowers finished it off—a work of art which afforded both pleasure and profit to the little lame girl.

By the time the leg was strong enough for Mollie to go home, Brown Dinah was sold, and a steady roan horse, not so swift, but much more comfortable to ride behind, made the journey back to the Surrey farm, where a warm welcome drew Mollie back into the home nest.

It all happened so many years ago, and yet the great, great, great granddaughters of Mary Dann can look at the carefully worked letters (quite distinct still, although some of the gayer colours have faded with time) and imagine the patient little worker from whom they inherited the old sampler.

A POOR QUAKER RABBIT-CATCHER

1789

Down by the side of a broad hedgerow, which separated two cultivated fields on the southern slope of the Mendip Hills, came a heavily-laden figure, in smock frock and leathern gaiters. Over one shoulder he balanced a stout stake, on which a dozen dead rabbits were threaded by their crossed legs, and in the other hand he carried a great bunch of nets and a small cage, through the bars of which could be seen the lithe, yellowish-white body and jewel-like pink eyes of a ferret, while a sharp terrier, very rough and muddy, followed him closely.

He was just opening the gate leading to the high road when a gay voice greeted him from a bonny, rosy girl of twenty, in charge of an old black horse with large wicker panniers.

"Daddy Hancock! Dear Daddy! I *am* pleased to meet you! I have got something so nice to show you! And how is Mammy Hancock? I have not seen her for weeks—we have been so busy."

"Ah, Flower, my dear, it's the same with

us. The good Mammy is well, but though it is six years since thou left us, she still misses the little feet that saved her so many steps, and loves to see thee when way opens for thee to come to Cheddar."

"The cheese season will soon be over now, and then I shall have more time. You see, on Sundays, now we have so many cows, I have to begin milking directly my children go home. Since Patience went to service I have so much more to do. Dear Patience! I do miss her; she was such a good helper with the Sunday School. Now, Daddy, do put those rabbits on the gate-post for a few minutes while I show you something.

David Hancock laughed, shifted the weight of the stake on to the stone post, which was just the height of his stalwart shoulder, and put down nets and cage.

"What a fine lot you have caught to-day!" said the girl.

"Ay! and they are a good riddance. Farmer Lewis means to grow wheat on one side of that bank, and early vegetables for Bristol market on the other. The bank is fair riddled with their holes, and they rabbits would have cleared off every green thing like locusts. I must give 'em three or four days more to make a good job of it. But what is there to show me?"

Flower Waite took from one of the panniers

a blue checked handherchief, and, unfolding it, displayed a neat Testament and two paper-covered primers.

"There, that is what I have been wanting for a long time. I knew I was to take some small cheeses and three pairs of ducks to Axbridge market to-day, so I got up before it was light, and went up the hill pastures and picked nigh two pecks of mushrooms before milking time. I sold them all, and bought not only those, but flour and sugar and ginger to make enough gingerbread to treat all my good children next Sunday. The Testament is for Talitha Tripp. She is my best scholar, and helps me to teach the others. She *will* be delighted to have a book of her very own! She said her father had a Bible and chose her name out of it, but after he died her mother sold it for a groat. I can't let those dirty little hands touch the nice Bible you and Mammy gave me, but I lay it on the table, and the ten older ones, who can read, stand with their hands behind them and read in turn. Then we only had three primers, but now four or even six more children can read them at once."

"Thou spent thy mushroom money well, dear maid," said the rabbit-catcher, looking at the bright girl with proud affection. "And what else dost thou teach them?"

"Oh, all of them can say the Lord's Prayer and some the Ten Commandments, and all can sing the evening hymn and 'O God, our help in ages past.' They love the Sunday-school; but oh, Daddy! Shipham does need some more teaching dreadfully. Mr. Jones does his best at the church, but no one seems to heed him, and the drunkenness and fighting among the miners is dreadful—and the big girls are shocking! It grieves me to think that my Talitha and Joan White and Sexa Phippen in a few years may be like that."

"Nay, Flower, thy Bible teaching under God's grace may keep them from evil."

"I hope so, Daddy, but I can do so little, and one hour in the week seems nothing. They want teaching every day to be industrious and neat, as Mammy taught me. Many of their mothers cannot use a needle, or spin or knit, or anything decent. Yet Shipham people are not poor. Jerry Day found such a lot of calamine in his gruff last week that little Sally and Nancy came to school in fine red cloaks and new shoes, but no stockings, and only dirty rags under the cloaks. And the houses are so dirty and miserable and neglected. Mother says it is ordained for the poor to be like that, and that it is our duty to keep ourselves to ourselves, and father laughs at my Sunday-school. Yet they are good people,

and go to church, and mother took almost as much pains with Patience as Mammy Hancock did with me."

"Many good people like thy father and stepmother do not seem to feel that it is our duty and privilege to spread God's good tidings to those around. It's little enough we poor folk can do, Flower, but we can help just a few to higher things, and thou hast done well in gathering those little children around thee."

"But, Daddy, the gentry could do so much more if they only cared! Those children were perfect heathens when they came to me, and the village people never think of God but to take His name in vain. It could not always have been so in Mendip. Look at the beautiful churches—Cheddar and Axbridge and Winscombe and Rowbarrow—*somebody* must have cared for Christianity when those were built. Why did the faith die out here?"

"May God Almighty send better times for poor Mendip!" said David Hancock solemnly.

"Well, Daddy, I must be getting home. It always does me good to see you." And with a hearty kiss on the weather-beaten cheek the farmer's daughter took the bridle-path which led towards her home at Shipham.

When she was but a year old her mother

had died, and Farmer Waite was thankful when the childless Quaker couple, David and Mary Hancock, who had a tiny holding in a hamlet near Cheddar, offered to take charge of the little one. Here Flower grew up a happy, well-trained little maiden, until, when she was fourteen, her father married a widow with one daughter of twelve years old, a sweet-tempered, hard-working girl, who speedily became as a sister to Flower.

When they grew up to be capable dairy-maids, it was her own daughter, Patience Seward, whom Mrs. Waite decreed should go to service, and she was now working on a cheese farm at Cheddar, too far off to help in the little Sunday-school in which she delighted as much as Flower, and which the parents allowed them to hold in the back kitchen, with amused but perfectly uncomprehending indulgence. But in the Hancock home Flower had been trained to a larger heartedness, and the neglected ignorance of the Shipham children had roused a deep desire in the young girl's heart to feed Christ's lambs in however simple a way.

David Hancock watched the girl out of sight, with an inward prayer for a blessing on her efforts; but as he shouldered his rabbits and walked on her questions haunted him. Why was the Mendip country given over to

heathenism ? He knew far better than Flower of the unspeakable degradation and wickedness of the villages among those beautiful hills. Cheddar especially, the large, populous village at the entrance to the magnificent gorge, which even in those days was visited by many a party of gentry from Bristol in coaches-and-four, who looked at the cliffs and the caves, and carelessly threw halfpence to the many whining beggars who congregated there.

For forty years Cheddar had had no resident clergyman. A curate rode over from Wells, seven miles away, for one service in the fine old church on Sunday, and christenings, marriages and funerals might then be crowded in. What wonder that the two first were frequently omitted, and burials perforce took place without one word being spoken of a hope beyond the grave.

There were some rich farmers, but they were as ignorant, as drunken and dissolute as the poorest villagers.

During the laborious days that followed Flower's question constantly returned to her foster-father's mind. There were plenty of gentry and high church dignitaries in Somerset, yet none seemed to care for the welfare of the miners and labourers. How could they be so callous—so content to be ignorant of the state of things ?

One fine autumn morning David took his loaded donkey-cart to the hamlet of Cross, which lay on the great coach road from Bristol to Exeter. Here was a large inn, where many travellers halted for a meal. It was quite celebrated for its rabbit pies, and was the best market for David's game as well as his wife's little stores of butter and eggs.

As he came out of the courtyard a Bristol postchaise stood before the door, and the postillion was superintending the change to fresh horses. Two ladies had alighted, and were talking to the inn-keeper—slight, middle-aged women, nicely dressed in silk skirts, one violet, the other green, cashmere shawls and large straw bonnets. He heard the reply, "Cheddar, ma'am? Really, I know very little of the people. But here is a man who lives near there, honest Quaker Hancock, the rabbit-catcher. He will tell you all you want to know." And he bustled off.

The ladies came forward to the donkey-cart with a courteous greeting, and the shrewd dark eyes of the elder lady noted the pleasant refinement of the strong, weather-beaten face.

"We were wanting to know, my good man, a little about the inhabitants of Cheddar. Who are the leading people there?"

"I hardly know; but there is one who thinks he is—Farmer Hemmens. He keeps

most cows and employs most labourers; they call him churchwarden too, but I believe he never darkens the door of the church building."

"We have a plan to benefit the children of the place—to start a little school for them."

"A school for Cheddar! That is sorely needed. And what do you mean to teach?"

"Chiefly—for we hear there is great ignorance—to fear God and keep His Commandments; to read the Bible and learn the way of salvation."

The rabbit-catcher's face lighted up with almost incredulous joy. His blue eyes filled, and tears fell on his rugged brown cheeks.

"God bless you, ladies!" he said solemnly. "If you only knew the terrible need there is, and how some few poor folk have prayed for a concern to be laid on the minds of those able to help!"

Hannah More, the popular authoress of her day, the friend of bishops and statesmen, felt that here was one of the salt of the earth, and was thankful that one man in that dark region was in true sympathy with her plans.

"Thanks for that word, my friend," she said. "And now tell us if there is an empty house in the village that would be fit for a school?"

"There *is* one, but it's quite a place—and there would be the rent. I'm afraid Farmer

Hemmens and the likes of he will never pay to have the poor taught."

"There will be no need to ask for that kind of help. We must tell you that lately a good friend of ours, Mr. William Wilberforce, who is a great man up in London, and desires to use his wealth in his Master's service, went to Cheddar to see the cliffs. He came back so shocked at the ignorance and depravity of the young people in the village that he offered to provide money, not only for a Sunday-school, but for a day-school, where habits of industry and thrift can be taught. But we must have the consent of the chief employers of the village, or they may set the people against the school. Now to whom shall we go first?"

"Farmer Hemmens, certainly," said David. "But you will find him a rough one, and he is generally drunk after dinner. He lives out at the Rye Farm—a pretty bad road for a post-chay."

Taking out her notebook, Hannah More took down his name, and also those of a dozen other farmers and shopkeepers, David earnestly giving every assistance he could to these good friends. His last words to them were: "You will have much difficulty, but let not the enemy tempt you to go back, and God bless the work." Then he watched the chaise as it rolled away in the direction of Rye Farm.

It happened that this was the very place where Patience Seward was dairymaid. It might seem strange that a careful mother should place a girl of eighteen in such a household, but it was considered a privilege to get a footing in the leading dairy of the district. Mrs. Hemmens' cheeses never swelled or cracked, or did anything they should not, and rough though she was, she appreciated a girl trained in cleanliness and industry.

Few strangers came to the remote Rye Farm, and it was with astonishment that Patience heard a gentle woman's voice, and then her master's, roughly protesting that the poor of Cheddar were very well off as they were, and as for teaching religion it was a very dangerous thing, and had done nought but mischief since the old monks of Glastonbury brought it in; for the poor to hear more of it would be the ruin of farming."

Here a pleasant voice was heard praising the currant wine as extraordinarily good, and thanking Mrs. Hemmens for providing it and such excellent pork pie for strangers, who had come all the way from Bristol because a good friend wished to give some money yearly for the good of the parish.

At the word money the farmer pricked his ears, and Hannah More went on to explain that the school would be no expense to the

place. The children would be better under control—rather than getting into mischief and robbing orchards. To make people more industrious would reduce the Poor Rates. The girls would be trained to be good servants, to sew, and knit, and spin.

"And the spinning-wheel, you know, ma'am," said Hannah More, turning to Mrs. Hemmens, "is work that can never go out of fashion."

The farmer's wife agreed, and with more of this bland diplomacy the ladies departed.

The same scene was repeated with little variation in a dozen houses around Cheddar. In each they were assured that it was dangerous to teach the poor, in each they were offered wine or brandy and water, and in each they wrung a reluctant consent that the children of labourers should be encouraged to attend.

Late in the evening the post-chaise with its weary occupants rolled away to Bristol, and few in the villages even heard the ladies' names. They little knew the tumult of hope and joy they had awakened in the mind of the quiet dairymaid at the Rye Farm. The new-fangled plans were freely discussed and grumbled over before her, and it seemed as if the visions of many a talk with her stepsister, Flower Waite, was really coming in very truth—Sunday and day schools in a Mendip village!

Perhaps those good ladies would start similar work in Shipham!

When sent to Cheddar on an errand, Patience was delighted to see a house which had been standing empty for years in a large garden being repaired and whitewashed, and new floor and windows put in a large ox-shed adjoining. She told Flower all she heard, and obtained leave to meet her at Cheddar Church on the Sunday in October when the schools were to be opened.

In their neat Sunday gowns of pink-checked homespun linen and black beaver hats over their mob caps, the two girls stood watching as the one hundred and forty rough, ragged children walked in procession from school to church, marshalled by the two Misses More, bright and animated, and with the authority of experienced school teachers, and Mrs. Baber, the new governess, and her daughter Betsey, both born gentle disciplinarians.

The novelty was so great that the church, which often had had only a dozen attendants, was crowded by hundreds; but the curate from Wells "was so judicious as to give a discourse upon good Tory principles on the divine right of kings, but the divine right of the King of kings seemed a subject above his comprehension," as Hannah More wrote to William Wilberforce.

But there were hearts present in that church, including the two young dairymaids, who were full of thankfulness, and five miles away, in the little Friends' Meeting House at Sidcot, where he had jogged slowly in the donkey-cart with his good wife, sat David Hancock, his soul full of adoration and thanksgiving, that at last some light of Christian instruction was dawning in Mendip.

All through that winter, seldom as the girls were able to visit Cheddar, they eagerly sought for every scrap of information they could pick up about Mrs. Baber and her wonderful work. The spinning mistress who helped her kept a dozen of the older girls busy at the wheels which had been provided. The boys washed, picked and carded the fleeces bought of the hill farmers, and soon enormous skeins of well-spun worsted were sent to Axbridge, where the inhabitants had a great reputation for knitted stockings for the Bristol shops.

This industry and the small earnings was more talked of in the village than the religious knowledge ; but when the Misses More returned in the spring they were delighted at the progress made towards turning young savages into Christian children.

Further financial aid was offered by William Wilberforce and his friend the banker, Henry

Thornton, and the ladies began to look about for fresh fields to conquer. The mining villages of Shipham and Rowbarrow were reported as the most ignorant and lawless ; not a constable dared arrest a man there, lest he should be thrown down one of the deep disused shafts of the calamine pits and never heard of more.

The Misses More, at a tea-party of some of the gentry near their Wrington summer home of Cowslip Green, ventured to make enquiries.

" A school at Shipham ! You might as well teach the natives of Central Africa ! " was the cry. But one gentleman said :

" You are forestalled there. I heard that a silly maid, the daughter of my tenant, Farmer Waite, gets a score of little ragamuffins together and teaches them to sing Psalms, forsooth ! She had better save her breath for her curd-cutting ! "

Here was news indeed ! The very next afternoon the ladies mounted their horses, Hannah on a pillion behind the elderly groom and Patty riding single, and made their way to the Waite's farm. The door was opened to them by a girl of twelve, very scantily clothed, but at least clean, who dropped an awkward curtsey. The master and mistress were out—gone to a sheep fair ; Miss Flower was milking—she would take them to her.

" Tell me, my dear," said Miss Patty, who

had a way with children which always won their confidence, "is it true that there is a little Sunday-school at this farm?"

"Oh yes, ma'am; Miss Flower had thirty of us last Sunday."

"Oh, you are one of her pupils! And what is your name?"

"Talitha Tripp, please, ma'am."

"Tabitha, I suppose you mean."

"No, ma'am, I was christened Talitha Cumi. My father, who is dead, was a scholar and chose it; and now I can read and have a Testament, I find it was the name of Jairus' daughter, as was raised from the dead."

The muscles around Miss Patty's mouth twitched, but she only said sweetly: "It is nice for you to be reminded that the Lord called a little girl of your own age. And how did you get your Testament?"

"Miss Flower gave it to me for being the first to learn to read, and now I can help her with the little ones," said Talitha importantly, as she ushered the ladies into an orchard, where Flower was just rising from her milking-stool by the side of a great brindled cow, with her clean-scrubbed bucket full of foaming milk. The ladies greeted her kindly and apologised for hindering her work.

"Oh, I have just finished milking, thank

you, ma'am. Talitha, you can drive the cows back to the Six Acres. If I may just take this milk to the dairy, I am quite at liberty."

In a few minutes she stood before them, having discarded her rough apron and sun-bonnet, looking the picture of a buxom dairy-maid. She led the way to the best parlour, with sanded floor, white linen curtains, and scanty furniture of well-polished oak.

Flower recognised her visitors as the Cheddar benefactresses, and her heart was beating with high hopes. With their usual gentle tact they drew from her the story of her unselfish labours for the Shipham children.

"And how did you get books?" they asked.

"I have not many, ma'am. We started with three little twopenny primers—you can get them at a shop in Axbridge. A few of the children can read from my own Bible. Then I have "*Watts's Hymns*," which a dear old Quaker lady gave me when I was a little girl. Most of the teaching my sister Patience and I have done by voice. Several can say the Ten Commandments and three Psalms, and know the words of the hymns they love to sing."

"And the Church Catechism—I suppose you teach that?"

David Hancock's pupil looked surprised.

"No, ma'am, I never thought of it," she said simply.

"But you attend the church?"

"Oh yes, ma'am, father and mother always keep to their church, and we have a rare good curate now—Mr. Jones. But they say the rector gives him so little salary that he is obliged to teach weekdays. He goes over to Mr. Benwell's Quaker school at Sidcot to give French lessons."

"Is the rector never in Shipham?"

"Oh no. No one has seen him for many years. He is ninety-four years old. He sends to collect the tithes, but the rectory house has stood empty, they say, for a hundred years."

"Is it that shut-up house we passed just opposite your field gate?"

"Yes, ma'am. Father being churchwarden keeps the key. Many a game have my sister and I had there, pretending it was ours, and that we were going to open a school for the village girls."

"Well, my young friend, that is exactly what we are intending to do. Your Sunday-school is very good indeed. We thank God that someone tries to teach these poor children. But do not you think a school on weekdays to train them in industry as well as to read their Bibles would be a blessing to Shipham?"

Flower's honest face glowed with joy—a

day-school! Perhaps a teacher like Mrs. Baber at Cheddar! It seemed too good to be true.

"Oh, ma'am, indeed it would! And the Rectory would make a fine school. There hangs the key. Would you like to look over it?"

"Perhaps we had better, although we cannot be sure it would be let to us for such a purpose."

Joyfully Flower guided the ladies to the empty house. Grim and neglected as it was, the walls and roof were sound, and the practical Miss Patty saw its possibilities. How a partition could be removed and a window enlarged, and that a coat of whitewash and clean floors would make a marvellous difference.

The largest upstairs room would do for spinning, of which they made a great point. They found that Flower had been well trained in this and in sewing, and could write prettily and keep accounts enough to make necessary records, for no writing was to be taught, as Hannah More considered it quite superfluous for the poor.

At last, as they walked back to the farm, a look was exchanged between the sisters, and then Hannah asked Flower if her father would be willing for her to leave the dairy work and be a schoolmistress, naming a wage

absurdly small to modern ideas, but enough to pay a dairymaid twice over to take her place.

Flower thankfully accepted, provided her father would consent; and when an assistant was spoken of, begged that the ladies would engage her stepsister, Patience Seward, who loved children as much as she did.

The Misses More did not let the grass grow under their feet. The very next day they rode again to Shipham, secured Farmer Waite's consent, and found from him the address of the absent rector. He, at the age of ninety-four, insisted on the ladies taking a lease, and was as rigorous about the rent as if they were taking the house for an assembly room!

Through the summer months repairs went on, and as Flower and Patience laboured at cheese-making their minds were full of their prospects, and they strove in their scanty leisure to prepare themselves to carry out Miss More's well-considered plans.

In September 1790 the Shipham school was opened, with one hundred and forty pupils, and Hannah More wrote: "If ever the blessing of Heaven was implored by two young hearts to protect and direct them, it proceeded, I believe, from these two young creatures, whom we took some pains to instruct in our method and manner of teaching."

It was a great advantage that in Talitha Tripp and other of their old pupils the young mistresses had a nucleus of loyal and loving children who could take the lead among the little Shipham savages, accustomed to run wild among the fields and calamine pits all their time.

To this work was soon added a Sunday evening meeting for the parents, who came to hear a printed sermon and prayer read by the ex-dairymaids, and what would now be called a Bible class on a weekday for the wild, older girls, whose conduct was a terrible drawback to the good work in Shipham for many a year.

Shipham was the first place where Hannah More established a sick benefit club for women, which continues to this day. The club day, with its procession to church, its rare luxury of a dish of tea, the extremely plain-spoken address from one of the Misses More, and the public presentation to brides of good character of "a Bible, five shillings, and a pair of white stockings of our own knitting," was a great help in civilising the rough women of the village.

On a day of glorious sunshine in August 1792 David Hancock and his wife took that almost unprecedented thing in their lives—a holiday! Ascending the grand height of

Callow Hill, they found there preparations for a school feast, perhaps the very first ever held in England. Some tents had been reared, busy hands were cutting beef and bread and cold plum-pudding, and with cords and stakes preparing places for the five hundred school-children to regale themselves.

Then appeared the procession. First the Misses More, then Mrs. Baber and her Cheddar children, and then what the Hancocks had come to see—their much-loved foster-child, Flower Waite, in charge of nearly two hundred Shiphamites, marvellously clean and tidy, and all carrying flowers tied to white wands.

All sang as they walked—the same simple hymns that were taught in all the schools; and when, after the feast, a little examination of attainments and giving of Bibles and Prayer Books to those who merited rewards was held, the dairymaids' pupils took a very creditable place.

The Mendip feast became a great institution, attracting thousands of spectators; and although Flower and Patience soon married and gave up teaching, we may be sure that their hearts and that of David Hancock never ceased to be thankful for the enlightenment brought to the Mendip villages by William Wilberforce and Hannah and Patty More.

THE GOOSE THAT WAS NOT VERY YOUNG

1785

"WELL, farewell, neighbour Thornton, and I hope the eggs will hatch out well."

"Good-night to you, Deborah; it was kind to bring them, for I have long wanted some Dorkings like yours, and though 'tis late in the year to set hens, I'll manage some way. It always cheers me up to see you and the lads, bless their little hearts!" And the elder woman patted the dimpled cheek of the baby her visitor held as they stood together on the threshold of a small Sussex farm-house.

A great contrast they were: Mrs. Thornton stout and grey-haired, with a bright green ribbon round her mob-cap, and a chintz gown with gorgeous tulips on a chocolate ground; while Deborah was young and active, with the neatest of white sun-bonnets and aprons and a drab cotton gown.

"They boys will be a handful for ye by and by, my dear; but they may be better

sons to you than mine have been to me." And the poor woman sighed heavily. "I never saw a sturdier lad than your Stevie, bless the boy! Where has he got to?"

"He took the empty basket while we were talking. Ste-e-vie! Mother is ready to go home."

Out of the orchard close by came a bonny boy of four and a half, still in petticoats, his fat arms bare and brown, with a clean home-spun pinafore and a home-made straw hat on his flaxen curls. Rather unwillingly he endured the kiss neighbour Thornton insisted on giving him, and started up the road towards home in front of his mother.

It was less than a mile to the Grey's farm, and about a third of the distance had been traversed when the energetic little fellow tripped on a stone and fell full length. He was not hurt, and scrambled up before his mother reached him, but out of the flat straw basket, which had jerked from his hand, rolled four or five small crimson apples.

"Oh, my Stevie! didst thou pick them up in neighbour Thornton's orchard?"

"'Es, I did," said Stevie defiantly; "there were lots. She'd let me have 'em."

"Perhaps she would, but she did not give them to thee, and my little boy knows it is

not right to take other people's things. Suppose some other boy took the mustard and cress from thy garden, thou wouldst not like that."

" 'Es I should," was the sullen answer, for Stevie knew well he was in the wrong, and felt thoroughly naughty.

" Put the apples in the basket again ; we must take them back to neighbour Thornton."

Stevie stood stock still. The gentle mother glanced at him, then picked them up herself, and, taking the unwilling hand, started on the return journey. But not many yards were accomplished when Stevie suddenly plumped down in the dust of the road as if all the stiffness was gone out of his lower limbs. His mother lifted him once, but in vain—down he went again.

" Oh, Stevie ! Why is mother's little man so naughty ? "

" Got bad legs," said Stevie sulkily.

But Deborah was not the woman to be frustrated by a four-year-old. Her left arm was fully engaged with the baby and basket of apples, but the capable right arm swooped up her sulky son by the middle, where he hung limp, head and heels, until, flushed and breathless, she arrived at the garden gate.

" Lawk a massy, Deborah ! What's come

to Stevie? Has he hurt himself?" said old Mrs. Thornton, waddling out in hot haste.

The mother dropped the heavy boy on the grass-plat. "No, neighbour, but I am sorry to say he is naughty. He was taking home some of thy early apples in the empty egg-basket."

"Didn't I give him any? Bless the boy, he is welcome! I suppose he picked them up in the orchard?"

"Yes, and instead of asking thee for them prettily, he took them, though he knows it is wrong to steal."

"Steal! That's a hard word for a four-year-old and an apple, Deborah Grey."

"Yes, steal," said the mother firmly. "My lads shall learn from the very first not to take what does not belong to them; I want them to grow up honest men."

"Well, you do have the singularest notions! I suppose it is your Quaker ways. I liked my children to be happy while they were little, and never crossed them in trifles."

"Stevie will be happier when he has learnt this lesson—to do as he would be done by. Come, my boy, we must trot home and get father's supper."

"Mayn't I give him the apples now, then?"

"No, thank thee kindly, neighbour, he must

not have them. It will help him to remember."

The stiffness had come back into Stevie's legs, and he trotted home beside his mother in silence. She talked to him cheerfully and made no further allusion to the apples; but when father remarked that she looked tired —Baby James was growing such a heavy boy—Stevie crept to her side and whispered penitently: "My legs shan't never go bad again, mother," and nobly kept his promise.

* * * *

The following winter, when snow was on the ground, Deborah Grey was making her butter under difficulties. The dairy was far too cold to work in, and the great red crock of cream stood near the wood fire burning on the kitchen hearth, carefully stirred round and round whenever the busy housewife passed near it. She felt it was approaching the right temperature, and taking the handle of the chimney crane in a stout holder, she tilted up the great black kettle until a copious stream of boiling water fell into the tall round wooden churn, which she tipped towards it with her left hand. Carefully she rinsed the scalding water round and round to prevent the butter from sticking, and had just poured

it into a pail when, from the large wicker cradle, came unmistakable sounds that that young autocrat, the baby, had awakened and required his luncheon at that very instant. She spoke to him soothingly, but at eight months old hunger has greater power than reasoning, and the screams became so piercing that she turned to lift him up.

At that moment in pranced Stevie, astride of a stick, taking an imaginary ride "to market like father."

"Ah, Stevie, just in time for thy tasks. Get the spelling-book from the side table while I attend to baby."

Stevie had just been promoted to the old primer, with a cover of coarse grey paper, in which his mother had learned to read twenty years before, and he cordially hated it, in spite of his mother's gentle teaching. In a moment the book was jerked into the steaming churn, and as his mother sat down in a low chair with the baby on her lap he said innocently: "Spelling-book isn't on the table, mother."

"Where can it have been put? We must ask Betsy. Ah, here she is! Betsy, didst thou see a little grey book when dusting the kitchen this morning?"

To Betsy all books were equal enigmas,

and she denied all knowledge of it. "Ah well, the horn-book must do for to-day. Bring it here, Stevie. Betsy, just pour the cream into the churn—carefully, and then thou canst begin to beat while I hear the boy's tasks. Now, Stevie."

Stevie had brought a quaint wooden frame with a handle, where under a thin sheet of yellowish horn was a printed alphabet and a few syllables. Stevie knew the horn-book by heart, and he rattled them off from "a, b, ab," to "o, x, ox," which last meant something real and tangible to the little country boy—an advantage which was shared by the next task—the repetition of Dr. Watts' "Let dogs delight to bark and bite." But "Twice one are two" had not the same advantage and was uninteresting, and the teacher had some difficulty in fixing the attention of the small pupil; but at last it was stumbled through, and Stevie was allowed to rush off to the barn, where his father's flail could be heard threshing out the wheat.

Deborah propped up the baby in the cradle, and gave him a wooden spoon to play with, while she quickly made a long roll of plain pudding, dropping it into the great black pot where a large joint of home-cured bacon was simmering. Just at that moment a rap came

on the door, and a prim elderly woman in a warm cloak and hood entered. She was the housekeeper of the bachelor rector of the parish, come for fresh butter. Dame Batten did not approve of Dissenters, but when the butter of the orthodox was streaky and rancid, and adorned with a profusion of red cow's hairs, what could be done but resort to the Quakeress whose butter had the best of reputations ?

" Ah ! I see I am too early," she said acidly, as the rhythmic thump of the churn-beater in Betsy's hands fell on her ear.

" The cream had to be warmed before we could begin to-day," said Deborah ; " but I can hear it just on the turn, and if thou wilt sit by the fire a few minutes I will soon beat up a pound for thee."

The visitor complied, and Deborah, assisted by Betsy, poured off the butter-milk, and rinsed the mass of butter in several cold waters before lifting it on to her freshly scalded wooden tray. But, alas ! what met the astonished eyes of the three women ? Butter indeed, but mixed up with innumerable fragments of grey and printed paper, the columns of words betraying that the novel ingredient was Stevie's lost spelling-book !

" How could it have got there ? I scalded

the churn myself ! " exclaimed Deborah. Then it flashed on her mind that her naughty son had hidden the hated volume, and the most convenient hiding-place was the depths of the churn !

" It's that book you was asking for—that there mischieful young Stevie have been and gone and dropped it in the churn ! " giggled Betsy.

Five or six pounds of winter butter was no small loss, although the price was only eightpence a pound in those far-off days, and it was with a grave, sad face that Deborah turned to her customer.

" I grieve that none of this is fit to offer thy master, but I have half a pound of last week's left, if thou wilt take that, and I will make some more as soon as I can collect the cream."

Dame Batten sniffed. She was a rigid spinster, who did not approve of small boys, and thought all mothers failed egregiously to keep them in order ; so she took herself off in high dudgeon.

" Betsy," said the mistress, " put this back in the dairy and say nothing about it. The men will be coming in to dinner soon, and I must talk to Stevie about it by himself.

With the irresponsibility of early childhood, Stevie had entirely forgotten his disposal of the spelling-book, and came in gaily, hungry for his meal. His mother filled his pewter plate with bacon and pudding, and neither he nor his father noticed how grave and silent she was.

"Don't go out again now, Stephen, I have something to show thee in the dairy," she said, as they rose from the table, and, taking the chubby hand, she led him away. The unlucky mass of butter stood on a low shelf. "Look, Stephen, all mother's nice butter spoilt because a naughty little boy was too idle to learn his tasks. Didst thou not know that the book would do mischief in the churn when thou dropped it in?"

"I didn't think," murmured the culprit.

"No, thou didn't think, so the butter was spoilt, and the money this week was to have bought father the new leather leggings which he needs so badly, and now he must wait. And I shall have to find money for a new spelling-book too, for our little boy must not grow up a dunce."

"I'm sorry I put it in the churn," whimpered Stevie.

"So am I, Stephen; but thou did worse than that: thou told mother a lie about the book."

"I only said it wasn't on the table; I didn't say I couldn't find it."

"Thou meant to deceive me, and it grieves me that my boy's word cannot be trusted to be true. Oh, Stevie! how can I teach thee that the truth must always be spoken if thou art to grow up a good man like father?"

"Aunt Jane whips Robbie," was the unexpected answer.

"Yes, and she gave me a little rod for thee, but I hoped never to have to use it. But I must make thee remember, so come upstairs."

The whipping was administered, gravely and sorrowfully, and the sobbing child put to bed after it. There the small mind did a good deal of thinking, and when the good mother brought him up a nice supper of hot bread-and-milk he kissed the hand that gave it and whispered, "I does love thee, mother!"

Never again was the rod needed. Lively and mischievous Stevie might be, but the lesson in truth-telling had taken firm hold of his mind. The lost spelling-book was replaced in a very unexpected way. Dame Batten told the rector of the misdeed of the boy and the loss of the butter; but to her surprise it was greeted with a roar of laughter, as the rector declared there was some spirit in the

little Quaker lad. His father might be a nuisance with his scruples about tithes and church rates, but for Deborah the parson had a hearty respect, as in many a poverty-stricken sick room he found she had supplied the nice broth or milk, or clean linen rag that was needed, and which Dame Batten was unwilling to produce.

So on his next visit to the town the rector bought a really good lesson-book, with readings as well as the detested columns of spelling, and actually "cuts" of lions and elephants and ships, things full of wonder to the little country boy, who rapidly began to benefit by his mother's teaching, and at eight years old he could read fluently and write neatly.

* * * *

That winter sore trouble came to the Gray's farm. Matthew Grey had taken, out of kindness, an orphan lad, Bill Stent, because he was starving, but he proved surly and unmanageable, and was too fond of skulking off to the town on every opportunity.

That winter such visits were strictly forbidden, as small-pox was known to be raging there; but the prospect of a specially exciting cock-fight was too much for Bill, and he sneaked off on a Sunday afternoon to his old associates.

A few days later old Isaac, who shared the men's room over the brew-house with Bill, reported that he was unwell, and the dreaded sign of the horrible disease appeared.

Poor Deborah! There were then no isolation hospitals, no nurses of any sort to be had. She could not leave a friendless lad to die alone. Betsy bore marks of having had the disease, but she was a flighty young girl, not fit for nursing; so with a heavy heart the mother sent her two boys to an aunt's and faced the terrible task herself. Bill recovered, but the infection seized on the gentle mistress, and after a few sad days she passed away. Her heartbroken husband took her coffin in a farm-cart to the Friends' burial ground at dead of night, assisted by three men of the village, who took the risk out of kindness and pity for the neighbour so sorely stricken.

It was to a desolate home that poor Stephen and James came back when fear of infection was over, and it was no wonder that Matthew soon felt that a new mistress was necessary, and married Susan Starley, who had recently joined the Friends. She proved a kind stepmother to the boys, easy-going to a fault, and they soon came to love her; but Stephen never forgot the lessons of his own mother's

stricter rule. He got little more schooling, for his father needed his help on the farm. Times were hard, and when Bill vanished as soon as he was recovered from the small-pox, and was charitably supposed to have been taken by the Press Gang, he was never replaced.

Susan always declared she had "no luck in a dairy," and wasted the small means with her easy thriftlessness. She had one child, a daughter, and when left a widow turned in helpless dependence to her stepson, Stephen, then just twenty-one.

That was a hard year, and when Michaelmas was approaching the rent was not ready—a point which Matthew Grey, in spite of poverty, had never failed to accomplish. The wool had not sold well, the harvest was a wet one, and the corn so damp that it could not profitably be threshed till Christmas, so the little hoard was still six pounds short.

Stephen had raised on the common a fine flock of geese that year, but had been disappointed in his efforts to sell them. Old Master Ticehurst, the higgler, who jogged about the country in a cart collecting poultry from the farms, shook his head. "Money was so tight that year that not even the gentlefolks were asking for geese; he could not buy them."

Stephen tramped seven miles to a town where a large market was held, but found that there also was no demand for geese, and he felt as if all his care in rearing the twenty-three goslings was in vain. When he reached home, weary and disheartened, he found the house deserted, but hearing voices in the loft, he climbed the ladder, where a most unexpected sight met his eyes. His stepmother, her daughter Susie, and James, now a stalwart lad of seventeen, were seated on low stools, and each plucking a goose at lightning speed, while the floor was covered with limp dead birds awaiting their turn.

"Ha, Stevie, here's luck at last! Just after thee left old Ticehurst came to say he had a pressing order for two dozen geese for one of the Prince Regent's banquets. He will give five and sixpence apiece for them if we meet him and his crates in time for the carrier's waggon at the cross-roads at five to-morrow morning. So I killed them all. Now get a mouthful of bread and cheese and come and help pick, for we must get them done, if we sit up all night."

"That's good news, Jem; I'll come at once. But there are only twenty-three geese; he must get one elsewhere."

"Oh, that's all right! I killed the grey

gander to make up the number; he was only a last year's bird."

"He is old enough to be tough," said Stephen doubtfully; and as he plucked the geese until the feathers lay like a huge snow-drift in the corner, and the more tedious process of "stubbing" went on, he debated in his mind whether it was quite honest to include the gander.

It was past midnight when the weary party went to bed, and at four Stevie and Jem arose again to take the geese to the cross-roads. While Jem fed and harnessed the horse, Stevie took his rushlight into the best parlour, found a bit of card and a quill, and in large black letters wrote, "NOT VERY YOUNG." He was tying this ticket to the leg of the defunct gander when Jem appeared to help carry the heavy birds down to the cart.

"Steve! How canst thou be so foolish? No one would notice that bird among the others! It's not business to be so absurdly particular. Old Ticehurst would keep that joke against us for years. Take that ticket off, unless you want to be a laughing-stock!"

"No, Jem, I'm not going to sell an old gander for a young one. 'Taint honest, and to be honest was what our own mother taught me, if thou art not old enough to remember."

Jem was silenced. The birds were packed in the cart, and Stephen jolted away down the rough road in the grey dawn. Ticehurst was waiting for him.

"Ha, Stephen, you've got done in time! My missus and I have been up all night picking fowls, but I have managed to fill the whole order of the Prince's caterer. What a nice lot of geese to be sure—so plump and clean-picked. Why, what's this? 'Not very young!' What does that mean, hey?"

"That gander was a last year's bird, neighbour Ticehurst, and I could not sell him for a green goose."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the old man. "Well, never in my born days as a higgler have I seen the like! 'Not very young!' Ha, ha, ha! What possessed you to do that, Stephen Grey?"

"I was brought up honest," said Stephen sturdily.

"I should think you was! Well, put it in here, ticket and all. It will show the Prince Regent's folk that there *are* honest men in the world still, and there ain't many such about the Brighton Pavilion, so I've heard tell. Here comes the carrier. Help me to lift in these crates, Steve, and I'll pay you on the spot."

The gold and silver were soon in Stephen's

pocket, and Ticehurst drove off chuckling: "'Not very young!' Ho, ho, ho! I shall never forget that gander!"

He never did. Over and over again in fairs and markets and private business interviews he told the tale of the labelled goose. Many said openly that the young Quaker was a fool; but others took silent note, and for very shame refrained from passing goods they were selling as better than they were. To Ticehurst himself it often acted as a check, and ever after Stephen found him a ready purchaser of small farm produce.

Year after year the honest man plodded on. James left the farm for more remunerative work; but Stephen made a home for his stepmother and Susie, who adored "Brother," and turned out a bright, active helper, who assisted him greatly in farming matters.

No eight-hour day then if a living was to be got off a small, barren farm. From dawn to dusk Stephen toiled, his only breaks in the week driving four miles to meeting on First and Fourth days, where he sat in his linen smock among other homely folk, worshipping God in his simple way and striving all the time after the ideals of right living learnt from the young mother who died so long ago.

He never married, and a nameless mound in a remote Friends' burial-ground alone shows outwardly that such a humble life was ever lived; but we may believe that the spiritual influence of his faithful consistency has been passed on, and helped not a few who came after him in their struggles for right against wrong.

HARMLESS AS DOVES

1798

A RED winter sun was just rising, lighting up the frozen valley of the little river Sow, in County Wexford. Every pool was coated with ice, every tree and grass-blade covered deeply with rime, until they resembled white coral. On the bridge were lounging a number of men, not ill-fed, but ragged and sinister looking, who stopped their eager conversation as a sturdy figure in rough, but tidy, home-spun frieze clothes, and with a ruddy, open countenance, came towards them from the path by the river side. He carried a fowling-piece and was heavily laden with three fine mallard, their metallic green heads gleaming in the sunlight, a couple of teal and quite a bunch of snipe, tied together by their necks, with their long pliant bills sticking out in all directions.

"Good-morning to you boys," he said cheerily.

"Ah, Master Joe, it is yourself that always has the luck with the shootin'," said one of the men.

"It is just the morning for wild-fowl. I was down at the far marsh before it was light, and have got more than we can eat at home."

He laid down his gun on the low wall and proceeded to untie his game.

"Here, Dan Nolan, would not thy mistress like one of these ducks to stew up for the taste of meat for all your hungry gossoons? And thy poor brother Mike, Morgan Burne—would he fancy a couple of snipe? They are delicate little birds for the sick, though hardly a mouthful for a hungry man."

Both offers were gladly accepted. Joe Williams tied up the remaining birds, and turning to pick up his gun, found one of the men was handling it admiringly.

"Sure, that's a fine gun," he said.

"Aye, 'tis a good one—I saved my sixpences for many a long day before I could afford to buy it; but it has helped to clear off the plague of rabbits on our farm and provides many a tasty meal for us."

Larry O'Neil gave it back reluctantly.

"Sure, Master Joe, 'tis too good to be wasted on rabbits entirely. 'Tis for more sarious work we will be wantin' guns before many weeks if things go on as they do now. We may be comin' after it one of these days to defend our rights."

Joe Williams's honest face flushed, and he

said firmly: "No gun of mine shall ever be turned against my brother men, call them what you will. Ah, Larry, there are better ways than violence to get wrongs righted, if you have patience."

"You Quakers are half Orangemen," said Larry suspiciously.

"Nay, my friend, we take no sides in matters that lead to violence. 'Peace and goodwill to all' is our motto, as all our neighbours know well."

Joe walked on, but overheard a murmur about "a good gun," which filled him with consternation. Some months before advice had come to all the Quakers of County Wexford, from Leinster Quarterly Meeting, to get rid of all weapons from their houses. Most had complied. Joe's father had at once thrown his ancient fowling-piece into the deepest pool of the river, but Joe, a vigorous young man of thirty, had clung to his new one. He was a remarkably good shot, and found keen delight in such expeditions as the present after wild-fowl.

He was popular with all parties among their few neighbours, and could not bring himself to believe in the danger of an uprising, but Larry O'Neil's words had brought conviction that Friends' fears were well founded.

It was not far to the yard of the picturesque

building still known as "The Quakers' Meal," among County Wexford folk, but in that short space his resolve was taken. He knew he was still watched by the idle group on the bridge. Two large stones, some two feet apart, lay near the mill door. He laid the cherished fowling-piece across them, and suddenly lifting a third heavy stone in his strong hands, he dashed it down upon the gun. A crash, and the long barrel lay bent and splintered, the well-polished stock falling by the side of the stones. He picked it up sadly, and as his Sister Jane appeared at the house door he said ruefully:

"Here is a bit of firewood for thee to use when these ducks are roasted, sister. We must make the most of them, for they are the last wild-duck we are likely to taste."

"Oh, Joe! thy beautiful gun! What made thee change thy mind?"

"I have been hearing ugly rumours of an uprising for some time past, and out Wexford way the military have been burning houses and haggards of those whom they suspect to belong to the United Irishmen. There was a desperate look on those men at the bridge, such as I never saw among our neighbours before. Had my gun been stolen to take human life, I should never have forgiven myself."

"I am sure thou acted under Best Wisdom, but oh, Joe, how can our poor countrymen be shown the wickedness of bloodshed to those who profess to be the followers of the Prince of Peace?"

"There is strong provocation on both sides, and the Protestant clergy believe in the force of arms as much as Father Murphy, who, it is reported, is the leader among the United Irishmen in these parts. We Friends must just go on, striving to be living examples of goodwill to all, and of patience under provocation."

"Well, brother, here is thy bowl of hot stirabout, for which I am sure thou art ready. As thou says, we will make the most of the wild-fowl. What fine, heavy ducks they are!" said Jane admiringly, as she carried them off to the larder.

Old John Williams of Randall's Mill was getting feeble and deaf, and most of the business had fallen into the capable hands of Joe. His wife was more active—a quiet woman possessed of a sublime faith in the Unseen, a mother among the several small meetings of Friends in County Wexford, and her son and daughter followed her lead with reverence and love.

Not long after the destruction of the gun the family were surprised by a call from the

local magistrate and a Protestant clergyman. In the best parlour, with carefully closed doors, they explained to the Williams family that they were organising the loyalists to resist the threatened uprising, and all young men and weapons must be prepared.

"We hear that you have a good gun, Mr. Joseph," began the magistrate.

"I have no gun at all," said Joe, smiling. "When I heard that it might be claimed for a sterner use than shooting wild-fowl I destroyed it."

The magistrate flushed angrily. "You young fool!" he said. "Do you not know there are plots on every side to murder all the Protestants and take their goods?"

"So I have heard," said Joe quietly; "but I do not see that it is laid upon me to do evil that good may come. We are Friends, and desire to be friendly with all."

"This young man evidently thinks he has a special protection from the Almighty," said the parson, with a sneer.

"And so he has, James Doran," said the gentle mother firmly. "'The Lord *is* a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him.' These are fearful times; we know not what is before us, but nothing can convince us that we need the defence of carnal weapons. We

are in the Hands of One who has never failed His trusting children, and He can protect us."

"Well, when you see your old parents and pretty sister abused and murdered before your eyes, you will wish that gun was in your hands, Joe Williams; but it is no use wasting our time on fanatics." And the visitors left, with contempt and anger in their worn and anxious faces.

As the spring wore on, more and more serious became the symptoms of mutual distrust and unrest. The men idled and neglected to till their land.

"Sure, we will have the best of everything when we get our rights!" they told Joe, when he asked them why the crops were not being set.

The Friends worked on steadily. Their farms were tilled as usual; the Williams's small mill ground wheat and barley for all the neighbourhood, and still the rumours of a coming catastrophe came from all sides.

It was in April that an old woman, Mary Kavanagh, who had a tiny farm a quarter of a mile away, came one morning in deep distress.

"Ah, Miss Jane, would you be lendin' us a pair of scissors? Those murtherin' military have put a hot pitch cap on my poor boy Mike's head, and the beautiful curls of him

are all plastered down, and it is in an agony he is, and no tool of ours will cut it off."

" Why, what has Mike been doing to offend the soldiers ? "

" Sorra a thing he did ; he was only colloguin' with his cousin, Dan Milligan, at Ferns beyant, and down on them came the military, and poor Dan, my own sister's son (her bed has been in hiven these many years, thanks be to the saints !)—he was taken and hanged on the big tree by his own door. It was a leader of sedition they said he was, and must be made an example of, and the other poor boys, nigh a dozen of them, they took to a cauldron of scaldin' hot pitch, and dipped linen in it, and bound a cap tight over the heads of them, and when it was hard they tould them to get away home before worse happened."

Joe took the shining scissors from Jane's hand.

" I'll come and help thee, Mary Kavanagh (some soft rag and oil we shall want, sister, please), and we will try and undo this cruel torment."

Micky, a lively lad of eighteen, was lurking in the cottage in desperate discomfort from the horrible pitch cap, and many were his groans as Joe, with skilful fingers, clipped hair by hair, until he was released and stood

bald and ashamed, with sad scalds on his forehead and neck where the thick dark curls had not protected the skin. These were gently bandaged with cool rags, and when Jane appeared with a nice bowl of white bread-and-milk, the boy ate eagerly, and was told to lie down and get a good rest after his long, painful walk home.

The mother continued to bewail "the beautiful curls of him, and I that have every day begged the blessed Saint Mogue to have a care of my boy! Our own saint seems to have clean forgotten us, or else he is angry that his holy bones lie beneath Ferns Cathaydral, that the Protestants stole from the true Church."

"Danny said that will be righted soon, and the Mass said in our own Cathaydral again," said Mike. "But there's one thing I must tell you, Master Joe—when the dark day for the Protestants comes the Quakers will be spared. At Ferns beyant the soldiers had no ropes for the hangins or linen for these cursed pitch caps, so they goes to Mr. Haughton's shop, where there was plenty of both. But he, good man—he up and refused to sell for such cruel work.

"'I cannot prevint you from takin' them,' says he, 'but with my consint no goods of mine shall go to tormint my fellow-counthry-

min,' says he; and although they held out the gould before his eyes, never a bit would he take."

"There's a lesson for you all, Micky, that mercy is better than violence. Now take a good rest, my boy, and come to the mill to-morrow morning and we will dress your burns again."

At last, one beautiful calm Sunday at the end of May, the dreaded news was told to Joe, by one of their workmen in the early morning, that the rebellion had broken out several miles to the northward. It was the custom of the family at Randall's Mill to start for Cooladine Meeting at eight o'clock, and they set off as usual on the car drawn by good grey Dennis, their favourite harness-horse. They had barely gone two miles when a neighbour, in a state of abject terror, told them that two men were being murdered at the cross-roads of Ballymurrin.

Jane turned white to the lips; Joe glanced at his mother. "I think we shall feel best satisfied to go on," she said composedly, and they found the cross-roads deserted, but did not dare to look behind the thick bushes by the roadside.

Several groups of men, armed with pikes, hurried by as they drove forward, and one

who knew Joe said civilly enough: "It has come to this with us at last."

But before they reached the Bridge of Ballinkeale they were roughly bidden to stop by a man on horseback, surrounded by forty armed men.

"Hi! there! You must turn back. We can have no spies taking news to Enniscorthy!"

"'Tis not to Enniscorthy we are going, my friend, but to worship God in the Friends' Meeting House at Cooladine, as all our neighbours know that we constantly do," said Rachel Williams quietly.

"Oh indeed, but we let none pass this day; and let me advise you, ma'am, to go to your home and keep out of sight, or I won't be answerable for the consequences."

Finding remonstrance in vain, Joe turned his horse, and they proceeded homeward, meeting on the way another car-load of faithful Friends. "Come and sit with us in the parlour at the mill," said the mother; "we must not miss our united seeking for Best guidance in these sad days, even if we are prevented from meeting with Cooladine Friends."

So when the horses were taken "from under," as they say in County Wexford, and Jane had given a drink of milk to the frightened Barry children, ten quiet people seated

themselves in the parlour, where the only sound was the rustle of the lilac bushes outside the casement window and the distant ripple of the mill stream. During the hour several voices offered fervent prayer for help and guidance and strength to endure patiently, and when timid Susan Barry collected her flock to return to their farm, she felt a calm uplift which lasted through many troublous days.

After Joe had seen their friends drive off and was standing in the yard, one of their workmen ran up in great excitement. "The United Irishmen are out, and say I must be armed when the soldiers come upon us; where is the long fork that we use at harvest, Master Joe?"

"Thou knows very well, Jim, that no fork of mine shall be used against a brother man, and if I gave it thee I should share thy guilt as a murderer."

"We are only out against our oppressors," said Jim sulkily; but he lounged off, making no search for the weapon.

After dinner Joe and his sister went to the high ground behind the house, and were shocked to see flames and smoke rising from many places where had stood the pleasant homes of their Protestant neighbours, and passers-by brought fearful accounts of cruel

murders, robbery and destruction. Gunfire in the distance told them that a battle was going on, and in the evening a crowd of men armed with guns as well as pikes, and some wearing military coats with ominous stains, trooped by, dragging with them a few survivors of the North Cork Militia, a hundred of whom had been cut to pieces on Oulart Hill.

They called for drink, and the Williams family, taking it as the best policy to be civil to all—even these savages, drunk with the success of their butchery—brought out buttermilk and barley bread and slices of the great joint of bacon which had been cooked for the workmen's meals.

The leader said threateningly that they would find it to their interest to have plenty of food and drink ready at demand, which they did not fail to do.

When they had passed, Joe found to his dismay that they had taken with them the four fine horses that he used in his business, leaving only some unbroken colts. News came that the rebels had taken the town of Wexford and were camped on Vinegar Hill, above Enniscorthy. There they dragged scores of innocent Protestants to be butchered by executioners kept mad with drink. Several Friends were taken up the hill and threatened

with instant death if they did not profess the Roman Catholic religion, the priests being prepared to baptise them on the spot; but with steadfast faith they refused, and not one Quaker life was lost during the ghastly three weeks that chaos reigned in County Wexford.

Joe Williams was taken by armed men in one of his own fields and marched off towards Vinegar Hill, but a neighbour spoke to him, and was asked by the rebels if he knew anything against the young man.

"Sorra a bit!" he said. "I know him well; he's a Quaker and won't fight, and I'll take my oath he is neither an Orangeman nor a Protestant."

"I've heard the Quakers are a good quiet set of people, and hurt none," said the man. "There are none in my part of the country, but I should be sorry to injure such," and he shook hands with Joe when he released him. His appearance at the mill was a cause for unspeakable thankfulness to his parents and sister, for a wild little gossoon had just rushed in with the news that he was a prisoner and on his way to the camp.

The same evening, when he was quietly attending to his farm, two more men arrested him, pointing a loaded gun at his breast, but his steadfast fearlessness overcame their

evil intent, and they slunk off, doing him no harm.

Some quieter days followed, only interrupted by the driving off of five young steers to furnish meat for the camp on Vinegar Hill, but to Jane's satisfaction the six dairy cows were spared. She and Biddy the maid were kept incessantly boiling great pieces from their store of home-cured bacon and baking barley bread, for constant were the demands of passers-by for food and drink. The Williams's little store of beer and mead was soon exhausted, rather to their relief, as the cool buttermilk was less likely to inflame the marauders to work further mischief.

When Sunday came again, anxiety for the welfare of their dear friends the Thompsons of Cooladine made the family very desirous to get to meeting. The Barry family, whose horses had also been taken, came over to meeting at the mill, but Joe and Jane, being young and strong, walked the long miles to their usual place of worship. Once they were roughly told that they might go to Mass, and nowhere else, as all Ireland was now of one religion; but someone who knew them interceded, and they passed on safely for the hour of worship with their friends, who, they were relieved to find, had suffered only the spoiling of their goods.

As the time of Enniscorthy Quarterly Meeting drew on, many were the conjectures if it would be possible to hold it—whether Friends from Dublin and County Wicklow would be allowed by the rebels to take their peaceful way through the disturbed district. Joe had quite intended to attempt to go, but he had, in the absence of his workmen, been toiling incessantly in the mill and on the farm, and a neglected blister on his heel made the long walk an impossibility.

Strange as it may seem, that Quarterly Meeting was duly held. Friends from Dublin arrived in their own carriages, and, as they entered the streets of Enniscorthy, had frequently to alight to drag away from their wheels the bodies of the victims of the cruel uprising, which no one had dared to bury. They had with them the brave and spiritually minded American minister David Sands, who they felt had been assuredly sent for their help and strengthening at this terrible time.

The day after the meeting, a party of Friends quietly set about burying the dead, no one saying them nay ; so they laid in one large pit the mortal remains of their neighbours which had been torn by swine in the very streets where they had lived as quiet and respected citizens.

David Sands, driven by a courageous young

Dublin man in his own carriage, visited the families of Friends all through the disturbed district, and no one molested them. At Randall's Mill his ministry was particularly acceptable, and a poor Protestant widow who had taken refuge there spoke of him as an angel sent from heaven in their hour of need.

From Jane Williams he heard the history of all they had suffered, and when she spoke with horror of a gun having been pointed at her brother's breast, David Sands turned to Joe with a smile. "I had a similar experience once, and thou mayst like to know that the man who held that gun now preaches the gospel of peace as a Quaker minister."

"How could that be? Have you had a rebellion like this in America?"

"It was private greed that put us in jeopardy. Some wild young military students at West Point, when mad with drink, came to my store at night and stole all my money. They were armed, and threatened us, but the hand of the Lord restrained them, and this one, who had been decently brought up, became deeply convicted of the sinfulness of his ways, left the Army and joined Friends. Most of the dollars were returned to me also," said David Sands; and after kind farewells he drove away on his errand of hope and mercy.

At last came the news that the King's troops had retaken Wexford, and had swept the camp on Vinegar Hill with terrible slaughter. Reprisals of the cruellest description were ruthlessly carried out. A whole street in the town of Carlow was burnt, the inhabitants, innocent and guilty, being driven back into the flames by the soldiery. Through the whole County of Wexford came the troops, treating all alike as rebels. Joe Williams was robbed of his watch, money, and penknife, in his own fields, by two soldiers, who then followed him to his home, took the watch from his feeble old father and some money from Jane.

Shortly after Joe was again accused of being a rebel, and a pistol held to his head, when one of the soldiers, who had been apprenticed to his uncle at Waterford, recognised him, and called to his comrade not to fire, for he knew he was a Quaker and would never have been concerned in the rebellion.

The troops were quite as ready to commandeer food and drink as the country people. One day Jane had procured and roasted a nice loin of veal for the family dinner, when in came a party of arrogant young officers and devoured it all, and also the little store of wheaten bread made especially for the elderly parents. Their followers made

equal havoc on the bacon and barley bread in the kitchen which had been prepared for the many refugees who were hiding in the woods and rocks about Edenvale and crept out at night to beg for a morsel of food.

One day Jane was in the meal-room when she was startled by a whisper from the trap-door above her.

"Jane—Janie, avourneen—couldn't you give us a drop of buttermilk? It's perishing with thirst we are."

"Who is up there?" asked Jane.

"Only us—Bess and Norah Byrne and our cousin, Peggie O'Brien. Our mother could not leave poor Mike, who is dyin', and Morgan is taken prisoner, and she wouldn't have us girls at home to be insulted by the soldiers, so she sent us here three days since, knowin' the Quakers would not turn us out. We brought bread and some blankets, and pulled the ladder up after us; but do give us some drink."

Jane fetched a large pitcher of milk and handed it up to the thirsty girls.

"That *is* good! May your bed in heaven be aisy, if you are a heretic, Miss Jane! And now can't you get us some yarn and needles, and we'll knit you some fine stockin's? Sure, we've nearly worn out our beads with prayin', and little the saints seem to heed—may I

be forgiven for sayin' so!" said Bess, the older of the two pretty Byrne girls, whom Jane knew slightly, but, being Roman Catholics, had never been intimate with.

"Try praying to God Himself—the Lord and Master of all the saints," she said; and soon a basket was handed up with mighty skeins of the yarn she had spun for winter stockings for her father and brother. She added two books, *The Life of William Edmundson* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, her whole library, except the Bible, which she did not dare offer.

So in the dreary weeks that the poor girls hid in the loft, often, when they heard the military about, not daring even to whisper, they had some employment to while away the long hours, and no one but their faithful friend had any suspicion of their whereabouts. Other refugees came constantly for food. As dear old Rachel Williams would say, it was wonderful how the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil held out. Joe ground the coarse meal for cakes, and Jane, having no market for her butter, could afford a little of that, so no hungry body was sent away empty from the mill.

Early one morning Joe was dealing out food to a group of wild, unkempt men, whom he well knew had been leaders in the rebellion,

when the sound of many horses' hoofs on the road alarmed them, and in a moment they dashed under the arch of the bridge, standing knee-deep in the water that fed the broad, mossy mill wheel. Grass and rushes hid the entrance, and as the poor men cowered together as much out of sight as possible, they heard the horses clatter above them, and a loud voice asking Joe if there were any fugitives about.

"I daresay there may be," said Joe composedly; "but I am a Quaker, and go about my business, taking no sides, and desire to be at peace with all men."

"Well," said the officer, "if you see any such tell them of the King's clemency. A Protection will be given to all who come to the military headquarters to apply for it."

"That is good news," said Joe; "I will tell all it may concern."

Away clattered the troop, and when the wet, scared men crawled out of their hiding-place, he earnestly advised them to avail themselves of this offer, and go back to their homes and their work in peace.

It was three Friends, Abraham Shackleton, Ephraim Boaks and John Thomas, who undertook to be mediators between the King's troops and the rebels in County Kildare. Disapproving of all violence, they were trusted

by both sides, and although for many months there were robberies, and threats, and sore anxiety, gradually the reign of terror died away, and it became possible to live a normal life again.

In spite of many moments of terrible danger, when their Protestant neighbours were being slaughtered all around them, not one Friend lost his life except one young man, who in a panic joined the King's army and was almost immediately killed by the rebels, but in worldly possessions they suffered sorely. A few had their houses burnt as well as rifled. Both sides of the combatants stripped them again and again of foodstuffs, of cattle, and of horses. Money was demanded by desperate men at the pike's point, clothing and bedding was stolen; for the chance to spoil their more thrifty neighbours was irresistible to the greedy, ignorant, and idle among the country folk.

Money to aid the Friends was freely supplied by their fellow-members in Dublin and England, and a considerable sum was put into the capable hands of Joe and Jane Williams. Their power to distribute was much helped by a pleasant surprise. One night there was a familiar whinny under their windows, and there stood grey Dennis, the good horse that had been stolen from them months before,

who had found his way home. He looked starved and hard worked, but Joe soon provided him with the warm bran mash that he loved, and in a few days he was fit to be driven into Wexford, where cloth, linen, and other necessaries of life were still to be bought.

The military in charge of the town told Joe he must take out a "Protection," but he stoutly refused, having had neither part nor lot in the rebellion; so a free pass was given to him, with which he went all about the country on his errands of mercy and healing.

He lived at Randall's Mill all his life, for neither he nor his sister ever married, and at the age of ninety he dictated to a relative the story of his experience of the protection of God for His trusting people during the terrible days of 1798.

POOR TIMATHA

1800

LYDIA BATES looked up from her ironing at the kitchen casement, against which sheets of rain were driving.

"Oh, poor father! how wet he will be! Put his list shoes down by the fire, Bessie love. It was threatening when he started, but he had promised to take Squire Long in the forest his three new wheelbarrows to-day."

"If father is gone to the forest, will he see Auntie Timmie?" said eight-year-old Bessie eagerly.

"Yes, I hope so. Poor Auntie Tim! I wish we could go to the farm oftener."

A shade of anxiety crossed the gentle face as she took another iron from the row standing up before the heap of glowing wood coals on the hearth. But a mother with five little ones "under her feet" has little time for sad reflections.

"Oh, Tommy, let Jim have a turn at pulling the cart; father made it as much for him as for thee. Baby is getting too near the fire,

Bessie. Patty dear, pussies don't like to have their tails pulled—look out of the window at poor Sallie feeding the pigs in the rain."

A rush to the casement followed, where in the farmyard a figure in a man's great coat and a sack over the head in coalheaver fashion was carrying buckets to the noisy inhabitants of the sty.

"Now she is shutting the little door of the chicken-house. Mother, why must hens be shut in every night?"

"To keep out greedy Mr. Fox, Tommy," and she began a merry chant: "The fox jumped up one still clear night," the elder children joining in as to a well-loved performance, until just at the climax, "The little ones picked the bones, oh!" a cart drove into the yard, and there was a general shout of "There's father!"

By this time the large clothes-horse was covered with nicely ironed little shirts and pinafores, with never a frill or scrap of trimming to relieve their home-spun plainness, and the mother put by the irons and began to set the table for supper. As she cut bread into a long array of rough, red earthen bowls, she said to Bessie: "I am glad to have some broth for father to-night—he is so fond of Hopping John."

The usual supper for the whole household, including Sallie and two young apprentices to the wheelwright's trade, was skimmed milk, poured hot on bread and seasoned with salt. When a little savoury broth, made by stewing bones and vegetables, was added to this, it was deemed a delicious treat, and called in Sussex by the strange name of "Hopping John."

Amos Bates came in after leaving his great-coat to drip in the back kitchen, and was greeted with rapture by his family; but the little people were well trained, and when called to the supper table took their places quietly. Sallie, now in a tidy cap and apron, came in, followed by the boys from their work in the wheelwright's shop. All bent their heads for silent grace, and then the horn spoons were busily plied in silence, except for a little conversation between Amos and his wife.

When all had finished, Bessie brought the large Bible to her father, for after supper was the only time available for family reading in that busy household. The father read a short portion, with a pause for silent prayer, and soon after each little one came to him for a loving kiss before the mother carried them off to their beds. Sallie washed the supper bowls, and sat down to her evening

task of spinning, while Lydia, by the scanty light of a greased rush held in rough iron pinchers, busied herself with the darning of her husband's long worsted stockings. She dismissed the 'prentices and maid earlier to bed than usual, and then said to her husband anxiously: "How didst thou find father and poor Tim? I see by thy face that thou hadst a trying time."

"Well, I must own I had. Thy father was sitting in his chair, looking very feeble and suffering, and full of his old grievances. He did seem a bit interested to hear of our three boys, but snapped at me when I spoke of baby as Jackie. 'He ought to have been Timothy,' he said; "but really, as he has treated us, I don't see how he could expect to have one of the little lads named for him. When I called him 'father,' he said 'I'm no father of thine!' I offered to take my horse and light plough (though I could ill spare the time) and break up the little potato field for them, but he only grunted, and said Timatha would dig it—he wouldn't encourage her laziness. Timatha lazy! I never saw anyone look harder worked; she hasn't a bit of flesh on her bones. She was toiling away as usual, but nothing she does seems to suit the poor old man. I think she gets fair bewildered with his fault-finding,

till she hardly knows what she is about. Why, he said one day she gave the new milk straight to the pigs."

"Amos! Did she really do that?" exclaimed Lydia.

"Aye, it seems so; and they have little enough milk from those two poor old cows on the wretched forest pastures; but she gave me her little box of butter to change for flour at the shop, and these two pairs of stockings that Friend Lee ordered. He will pay her well for spinning and knitting, and with the money she wants salt and a few other needfuls; but I fear they are hard up, the farm has run down so since he quarrelled with his last labourer, and now he is so feeble he can't help much. He can't sleep either, and blamed Timatha for going to sleep standing when he called her to rub his limbs last night. Poor miserable old man! What made him so cantankerous?"

"Old Great-Aunt Peggie told me he was a spoiled child. His father died when he was a baby, and his mother gave in to him in every way and made him feel so important, as if the sun rose to oblige him. He was a fine, handsome fellow, but he never could bear contradiction in the least thing. They were quite well off, and he took the big Broadmeads farm under the Duke, and married my sweet

mother, who was *too* good-tempered and humble, and gave in to his every whim.

"Their first child, little Timothy, was a picture of a boy, and father was so proud of him that when he died of croup at two years old he was distracted, but Aunt Peg, who was with them, said it seemed more like anger than sorrow. Then as years passed, and we five girls were born, each was a fresh grievance. He used to talk as if Providence had a special spite against him in denying him sons. Friends reasoned with him, for he always went to meeting in those days, although he was never more than a nominal Friend, but it did little good—'Never a son to bear my name,' he said.

"At last, when a fifth girl was born, mother ventured to suggest she should be called Timatha—(there used to be an old Friend at Horsham of that name)—and he seemed to try and train her to be a son to him—indeed he did with all of us. He never could get on with workmen, and we girls used to sow and reap and make hay, and look after the cattle and pigs. But he was a hard taskmaster, and the three elder ones all got married early; and how angry he was over each one's departure!"

"Well, they didn't get much quality in their husbands!" said Amos drily.

"No, poor dears, but they were driven to it. Then Timatha and I worked on together, till thou came for me. I have often wondered if it were selfish of me to leave her."

"Well, it was selfishness that suited me remarkably well!" said Amos, smiling. "No, my dear one, ours was a match of the Lord's own making; it would have done father no real good if thou hadst given me up when he used to storm at thee, or thy sister either; she always helped us all she could."

"Yes, she said it was best one of us should be happy, and she loves the children, although she can see so little of them. Five miles is so far away! Since they gave up coming in to meeting she has no break; her First-days are nearly the same as week-days."

"Strange that father should have taken that farm—the very name is enough—Lonesome, on Starvemouse Plain! What could he expect?"

"He had quarrelled so bitterly with the Duke's agent, and there was no other place to let when he was turned out of Broadmeads."

"People talk of a man's cutting off his nose to spite his face: that is what the poor old man seems always doing. He has kept a tidy lot of sheep, but he fell out with the wool-dealer five years ago over a farthing a pound, and the fleeces have just been piled

in the garret every year since, with the price steadily going down."

"At any rate, Timatha can always get a fleece to spin—she is a rare hand at that when she has time."

"Poor girl! I cannot forget her sad face; she looked dazed with overwork and sorrow," said the kind brother-in-law, as he picked up the sleeping baby in his wicker cradle to carry him upstairs to the bedroom.

Many times during the next few days did Lydia's thoughts turn to her sister in her lonely home, but duties pressed on both husband and wife, and they were not able to go to her.

One bright spring morning when the children were playing on the doorstep they raised a shout of welcome as they recognised a brisk, comely Friend with a basket on her arm. This was Eunice Beard, who had returned to her old home at the other end of the village, as a comfortably endowed widow, to keep house for her bachelor brother, Luke Lisle. She had no children of her own, but was overflowing with motherliness, and wonderful things came out of her basket to please the little ones. This morning it was an interesting family of pastry hedgehogs with currant eyes, and the prickles snipped up with scissors before they were baked. These were received

with ecstasy by Bessie and her brothers, and put in a row on the dresser to await their dinner hour.

"Now, children, run and get me a big bunch of cowslips from your orchard, they don't grow on our farm." Then, taking the baby on her lap, Eunice sat down for a chat. She was Lydia's true and tried friend, and soon the whole sad story of Timatha's hard lot at Lonesome Farm was poured out to her.

"Father has worried her most out of her senses," said Lydia. "Think of her having given *new* milk to the pigs! No wonder he was vexed."

"Did she never do absent-minded things in the old days?"

"Never! she was the clearest headed of any of us. Is there any chance of thy being able to go out and see her?"

"Not at present, I fear; this week is a busy one. I will go when I can. Why, little people, you have brought me far more cowslips than my beaupot will hold; we will make a ball of some of them;" and producing a piece of string she tied it from chair to chair, and taught the little fingers to hang the golden flowers across it, till she drew it up into a delicious golden globe, and tossed it into one little rosy face after the other—no wonder all children loved Friend Eunice!

Many times she thought of Timatha Randal with secret prayer to be guided into some way to help her. One morning she came down looking pale and determined, and laying her hand impressively on her brother's shoulder, she said: "Luke, it has been strongly laid on my mind that thou and I must go over to Lonesome Farm this morning."

"What, to old Timothy's? He hates visitors. Much thanks thou wilt get!" said Luke.

"No, it is poor Timatha who needs us."

"Then take the old mare and drive thyself; I have arranged to go over to Farmer Burt's to buy some yearling steers."

"The steers must wait. This is a weighty concern, Luke; we *must* go."

"Very well, sister, I have every confidence in thy leadings. We will go directly after breakfast."

It was early May, but as they drove toward the forest, not even the spring verdure could conceal the poverty of the land. Even the trees looked stunted, and the pastures full of moss and sour weeds instead of grass. It seemed strange that anyone should have built a farm-house there, but Lonesome was a substantial thatched dwelling with some sheds, an orchard of cankered old fruit-trees, and a small cultivated field at the

side. Here they could see a thin figure in sun-bonnet and short skirts digging the ground at a feverish pace. They tied up their horse and went to her. Both were shocked at the drawn, grey face and wild dark eyes that met them.

"Timatha, my dear, we have come to pay thee a little visit."

"Thank thee, Eunice, but I have no time. I *must* dig! I *must* dig! or father will be so angry."

"We will not hinder thee," said Eunice soothingly. "How is the poor old man?"

"Oh, he has been so bad—always in pain, night and day; he can't eat and he could not sleep; but he is sleeping nicely now, and I *must* dig."

Eunice glanced at Luke, who, standing behind Timatha, silently pointed to the large area of soil which had been freshly turned that morning—an incredible task for one woman's spade. He slipped away towards the house, while Eunice said gently: "If thou canst not talk to me, dear Tim, I will just gather some Lent lilies in the orchard before I go home."

She had picked but two or three when her brother came back with a face full of consternation. "I believe the old man is dead, Eunice," he whispered. "I found my way

to his room. Finding him so has turned her head. Wilt thou stay with her, while I go for her brother and sister and the doctor ? "

" Oh yes, I must, certainly," said the good woman. But she felt a bit eerie as her brother drove off ; it must be two hours before he could return. Would that spade continue its feverish work ? Could any human body hold out ? She looked round the kitchen : there was no sign of a meal. She opened the pantry door : three pans of milk stood there, but she could see no food, and she noted that a brown earthen teapot was covered with dust. Yet Timatha loved a dish of tea, and Eunice had brought in her basket a little packet of the best, with some sugar and home-made gingerbread.

In those days of flint and steel the fire in a farm kitchen did not go out from one year's end to another. Eunice parted the great heap of fluffy white ashes till she found its glowing red heart, and with a wisp of straw, some brushwood and the bellows, she soon had the kettle singing and the tea made. She carried her tray to a sunny bank in the orchard, and pouring out a cup with plenty of milk she walked boldly to Timatha, and held it close to the poor, parched lips. It was irresistible. The spade dropped, and she drank greedily.

"That *was* good! Thank thee, Eunice. But I must dig, or father will be so vexed."

"Thou wilt dig better for a little food; come with me to the orchard while thy father sleeps, for I have more tea there."

Timatha followed meekly. Eunice spread her thick cloak on the grass. "Let us sit down, my dear, and then thou canst sip it slowly, it will refresh thee more so." And she went on gently talking about Lydia and her little ones—how Jackie was beginning to walk and Bessie quite a mother to him—until two more cups were imbibed, and a square of gingerbread eaten, when the weary head leaned back on the bank, the tired limbs relaxed, and to Eunice's relief she saw that sleep had taken possession, and poor Timatha was at rest.

For more than an hour her friend sat motionless beside her, then quietly rose and slipped away, as she heard the wheels, first of her brother's taxed cart with Amos and Lydia, and then the doctor's high-wheeled chaise. Telling them what had happened, she sat on the settle by the weeping Lydia, while Amos accompanied the doctor upstairs.

"Oh, Eunice, is it wicked to feel relieved that the end of poor Tim's hard trial has come? If it had only been possible to love father! We used to jog along pretty comfort-

ably, but we neither of us ever had one single word of affection from him, as if he never could forgive us for being girls! And Tim has been so dutiful and worked so hard, particularly since dear mother died."

"No, Lydia, I don't think it is wicked. Thy father had a strange, bitter nature, and the good Lord knows what Timatha has gone through, and has sent relief; but she is worn out, and will want much care for some time."

Here the men returned, and as Luke Lisle came in the doctor said: "You were right, sir, poor old Mr. Randal must have died in his sleep many hours ago—last evening most likely. I saw that the end was coming when I was here yesterday, but did not think it was so near."

"Thou saw him yesterday?" gasped Lydia, who knew her father's inveterate hatred of medical men.

"Yes, I was driving past. I don't come this lonely road once in a blue moon, but yesterday I did, and Miss Randal came running out, begging me to see her father. He had life enough to scold then. My word! how he stormed at the poor thing for bringing me in, but I saw enough to know he was seriously ill, and I was on my way to tell you and Mr. Bates, when I was called to a case which was a matter of life or death."

Here a shrill voice from the garden interrupted them. "Yes, father, I'm coming!" And in burst Timatha looking still half asleep. "Oh, Dr. Bilton! *do* go away—he will be so angry!" Then, seeing the solemn faces of the group, she stopped, looking from one to another for an explanation of their presence. The old doctor was the first to speak, laying a kind hand on the thin shoulder.

"Never fear, Miss Randal, your father will never scold you again. He passed away in his sleep last night, and these kind friends are come to help you."

"Father dead! oh, it *can't* be true!" said Timatha. "I must be dreaming—my poor head!" And she put up a work-worn hand to either temple and gazed about her trembling. Her sister drew her down on the settle, but she took no notice, while the others consulted as to what must be done. When appealed to, she only shook her head, saying, "I can't think." Amos took her hand.

"Shall I make all arrangements for thee, sister? I know what thy wishes will be."

"That's right," said the doctor; "she is quite worn out. Take her up to her bed, Mrs. Bates, and let her sleep twenty-four hours if she will. I must be off."

Away he drove, while Lydia led her sister to her little bedroom, poor and bare, but

with some pitiful attempts at ornaments which Timothy would have tolerated in no other room in the house. Timatha sat down on the side of the bed.

"Oh, to be able to rest!" she said. "Night after night he has called me up every hour, and all day long was driving me about the farm to see after the stock. Last night he was twitting me with laziness because the potato field was not dug. So after he was asleep I slipped out in the moonlight to dig."

"What!" said Lydia, "and worked all night alone?"

"Yes, and the owls hooted, and the foxes screamed from wood to wood. We often hear them bark, but they were dreadful last night; and I dug and dug till Eunice came."

Meanwhile Lydia had helped her undress, and pinned her own shawl over the curtainless windows. The weary head was hardly on the pillow when sleep came. Lydia went downstairs much perplexed as to what to do next. She found that Luke and Eunice were insisting that she and her husband should stay with Timatha; they would arrange for the plain funeral as soon as possible, and let relations know. There were few to summon. Hannah Randal had died soon after her marriage; Sarah's husband was a rolling stone, and she had not been heard of for

years; only Jane was within reach, the wife of the landlord of the Antelope Inn at Horsham.

"But I cannot possibly stay," said Lydia. "Sallie means well, but she is a giddy young thing; and there is baby, and the 'prentices to do for—there *must* be a woman in the house."

"So there must, Lydia, and I'm going to be that woman. Isn't it a good thing that baby knows me so well?"

"Thou, Eunice! Thou art very good, but I could not burden thee. Bessie and Jim would be good, but Tom and Patty are so wilful and wayward."

"I'm not afraid of a four-year-old," said Eunice, smiling.

"Then our plain ways and meals are so different from thy home comforts."

"If I am dependent on creature comforts at my age, it is time I was broken of it!"

"Oh, Eunice, thou art a friend in need! it is the only way I could stay with an easy mind."

So the brother and sister drove away, and Amos and Lydia turned to the duties which must be seen to at all times.

Lydia was skimming the milk when her husband came to her with a letter. "Look here, wife, I have found this, written five

days ago by the landlord, Lawyer Yarrel, at Horsham. He's an old skinflint if ever there was one! In it he says he is sending the bailiffs on the tenth (that's the day we fixed for the funeral) to take possession of all stock and furniture, for seven quarters' arrears of rent. Didst thou know it was so far behind?"

"No—father was so close; but Tim said to me once she was afraid of it, for she knew there was next to nothing coming in, and she has had a struggle for bare food."

"Well, the landlord must take his own, although I cannot see how he has the face to ask such a rent for such a miserable place as this!"

"The farm has run down a good deal in the ten years father has had it," said Lydia, who knew more of agricultural matters than her husband.

"But surely the stock will be worth more than the rent due?"

"I doubt it. There is not a horse left and only a score of sheep. The most valuable thing is the wool, and that's none the better for rats and moths; but I hope there may be a trifle over for Timatha to go on with—she deserves it."

Towards evening Moses Hill, Luke Lisle's worthy bailiff, appeared on horseback with

a large basket stored with bread and meat and fresh vegetables, for Eunice had seen the emptiness of the larder.

For many hours Timatha lay quiet, but when the sheer physical exhaustion was passed, she became restless, constantly starting and answering an imaginary call from the silent room opposite. Next morning she rose and went about her work mechanically, milking the cows and feeding the pigs, but seeming dazed and bewildered, and unable to take in new ideas. Lydia took all responsibility, and explained that after the funeral her home was to be with them; but she made no preparations, although passively obedient when her sister bade her put her few possessions in boxes and bundles.

Luke's farm waggon came to carry the plain coffin to the little Quaker burial-ground a few miles away—one of those dreary endings of a poor warped life, when not one who stands around the open grave can feel anything but relief. A dear old apostolic farmer in his smock-frock said some words of prayer, commending all to the Divine mercy of Him who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust; then the small, silent company turned away. A tall, well-dressed, but hard-featured woman Eunice recognized

as Jane, the sister next older than Lydia. She drew her aside.

"Thy poor sister sadly needs a rest; couldst thou not have her at thy house for a while? Lydia's hands are full, and thou hast no children."

"But I have customers. Lor! Tim would be frightened out of her wits by what goes on in our bar parlour! If Lydia has children, she has got a sober husband, and that is more than some of us can say!"

"The expense, too. These are bad times for tradesmen, and Amos works very hard to keep his family. They say the landlord takes all at the farm, and a little help would be very useful towards thy sister's keep."

"After the way father treated us at our marriage they have no claim. Besides, *I* never see the colour of a guinea. Tom will pay a bill, but gives me none to spend."

With a careless farewell to her drooping sisters, Jane tripped up the steps of the mounting block and seated herself on the best of the two horses a serving-lad had been holding there, and rode away.

It was the beginning of an anxious time in the wheelwright's home, for it was only too evident that Timatha's mind was thoroughly unhinged. After her lonely life, the joyous clamour of the five healthy children

bewildered her, and she was terrified at the outcry when with gentle firmness Amos and Lydia strove to discipline the two who had inherited the stormy Randal nature. She would slip away by herself, sometimes to the orchard, but oftener to the bedroom which she shared with Bessie, and where Lydia encouraged her to sit and spin or knit in quiet.

As the days passed, and she had less hard bodily labour, the power to sleep left her, and she became wakeful and restless, until one night Lydia was awakened by a shivering and frightened child.

"Oh, Mother, Auntie Tim is gone! She woke me up shouting: 'Yes, father, I'm coming!' and then she ran downstairs and out at the front door in her nightcap!" sobbed Bessie.

Amos hastily dressed. It was a brilliant moonlight night, and far away on the straight road towards the forest he could see a ghostlike white figure, but it was not till the second mile on the way that his active footsteps overtook her. His kind voice and touch seemed to bring back the wandering senses; he led her back, sobbing, and with bruised and bleeding feet.

After this, Bessie was sent to sleep with Sallie, and a stout wooden bolt was put on

the bedroom door and slipped after Timatha had retired for the night. But in the daytime, gentle and docile as she was, she needed constant watching. One day when baby was teething and keeping mother fully engaged, and Amos was away on business, Timatha disappeared, no one knew whither. At supper-time she was still missing. There was nothing for it but for Amos to take a hunch of bread and cheese, turn his tired horse, and drive out to Lonesome Farm. Very forlorn it looked, the house locked up and deserted, but in the porch stood Timatha, calling pitifully to the father, who, she fancied, was within and had locked her out.

Amos tried the effect of a brotherly scolding, telling her it was unkind to come away without telling Lydia, who was so very busy. Timatha did not reply, but next day, when the sisters were alone, she began desperately :

" Lydia, dear, I couldn't help it yesterday ; my head was bad, and I heard poor father calling—calling—and I *had* to go. To-day I am better, and know quite well he is dead and gone, and that it is only fancy. I know I'm a dreadful care to you both, Lydia, and I want to say if I do such things I am not fit to live with you and the children—you must send me away. There are places for folks who don't know what they are about,

and I would rather be there than a burden to you."

"Oh, Tim!" cried Lydia, much distressed, "do not talk so. My own sister—and thou hast suffered so much! When thou gets really rested, thou wilt be better."

"I hope so. I try to do what you wish, but when that call comes it take away all my will and senses, and I know I ought to be under control, and I cannot bear that thee should be troubled."

The following day Eunice found Lydia and her overflowing work-basket established in her seldom used best parlour, which had a window looking over the vegetable garden where Timatha was weeding the onion bed with her old industry. Sallie had taken all the children for a walk, and the house was unusually quiet.

Glad to share her anxieties with the ever sympathising friend, Lydia told her what poor Timatha had said.

"She is so gentle and always does what we ask her, but this wandering spirit is dreadful; it takes so much of Amos's time to fetch her back, and he can ill spare it. He loses his sleep when she shakes her door and calls to father several times in the night. Next autumn, when we hope for another little one, what *am* I to do? If she could go

where folks would be kind to her, I shouldn't mind; but the mad-houses are dreadful, cruel places. I have heard the poor creatures screaming as I passed the one at Horsham; they say they are chained to posts and have only straw to lie on. Farmer Briggs' poor wife was sent there, and the keeper would never let her husband and sisters see her—said it upset her so—and when she died, they found her poor body covered with wounds and bruises. Oh, I could not send Tim there!"

"No, certainly not," said Eunice, who knew these sad facts only too well; "but we must try and relieve thee, my dear. Does she like driving? I'm going over to Capel to-morrow to take a leg-rest to old Friend Green. Shall I ask her to come with me?"

"Oh, thank thee! I think she would like that, and she would be so safe with thee."

The invitation was given, and in the cart with a steady old horse the pair jogged through the shady lanes. Timatha much enjoyed it and slept better that night; so almost every day the kind plan was repeated. Lydia feared that Eunice invented errands, but she always professed to have someone to call on, something to take or to fetch, and the slow drives through pleasant farms and villages—never in the forest direction—had a most soothing effect.

One day the errand was to bring from Reigate a " Publick Friend " from Yorkshire—Hannah Wigham, who had been holding meetings there, and was to stay with Eunice and Luke over First-day, and be present at the village meeting. She was a genial body, and did not quite understand the silence of the second passenger in the cart, who had been introduced as " one of our Friends who came with me for company."

" I am so pleased to meet thee, Eunice Beard," she said, " for thy cousin, Elizabeth Dale at York, told me of thee, and said I was to say she wishes thee and thy brother would take the journey north this summer and pay her a visit."

" Rather too far for us stay-at-home folks," said Eunice, laughing ; " but I should like well to see dear Cousin Betsey again. We were like sisters as children."

" We who are called to travel in the ministry get used to long journeys, and find it really very easy in summer time ; in winter snows and floods it is different, but where we are really called to go, way always opens for us."

They stopped at the Bates's house for Timatha to alight ; Lydia came out, smiling, with her bonny baby in her arms.

" We hope all to be at meeting to-morrow," she said, as the cart drove off.

"May I ask thy friend's history?" said Hannah Wigham to Eunice. "She has a sad face, and a strange look in her eyes."

Nothing loth, Eunice told the pitiful tale, and dwelt upon Amos's and Lydia's unselfish kindness in keeping Timatha with them.

"Indeed, I hardly know if it is right. She is never violent, certainly, but they have to watch her and control her like a child, poor thing! Once she begged her sister to put her away, but thou knows how cruelly poor mad folk are treated in asylums, and they cannot bear to send her to one."

"No wonder, as asylums used to be; but hast thou not heard of William Tuke's concern to treat the insane with gentleness and humanity? He and his wife Esther are some of our choicest Friends."

"I have seen Esther Tuke at Yearly Meeting once, and I have heard of her school for girls, but never of their asylum."

"They do not call it by that name. Their daughter-in-law, Mary Maria Tuke, who has a sweet bright spirit, suggested it should be called a Retreat—a safe place where poor people on whom this heaviest of woes has come can be kindly cared for and often healed. In the eight years since it was started quite a number of patients have returned to their friends quite cured."

"Is it in the city of York?"

"Oh no, William Tuke feels that country quiet is helpful. It is like a large rural farm with gardens and animals."

"That would be the very place for Timatha, if it were not so far away; but I fear it would be too expensive, and she has no means of her own."

"A certain number of cases recommended by Quarterly Meetings are admitted at four shillings weekly. Thou sees Friends think so highly of William Tuke that the wealthier ones have given largely, knowing it will be judiciously spent. He has admirable helpers in George and Catherine Jepson, and the success of their humane treatment is so great that already other asylums are trying the new method."

Here Eunice drove in at their own gate, and in the pleasant excitement of their visitor's company Timatha was forgotten.

But to Eunice's dismay not one of the wheelwright's family appeared at meeting. She walked up the village to enquire, and found her fears realised—Timatha had disappeared in the early morning. Amos had driven out to Lonesome Farm, waited some time and searched every corner, but she was not there.

"She must have wandered away in the

forest, where she may not be found for days, or stumbled into one of the deep Hammer-ponds," said Lydia. "Oh, Eunice, what *can* we do? I was just making the pudding for Sallie to boil, and tying on the children's clean tippets, and Amos was harnessing the horse, and she vanished. We ran up all the roads, but she was not in sight; but if she went down the broad hedgerow of the Home Croft, no one would see her. Amos and the 'prentices are gone there now."

Lydia looked so ill with apprehension that Eunice decided not to leave her. She sent Bessie and Tommy with a message to Luke, and stayed on to share the anxiety.

All that long summer day the search went on, until just at twilight an old forester whom they knew well arrived, half carrying the exhausted Timatha, whom he had found wandering in a pinewood miles from Lonesome Farm. Eunice waited till she was fed and comforted and safely bolted into her bedroom.

Then with sudden determination she told Amos and Lydia what she had heard about the Retreat. "It is a long way off, I know, but it would be worth that to have her under the care of such Friends as the Tukes and know she is kindly treated. You *must* be willing to send her, Amos, as she is wearing thy dear wife out."

"I know it," said the wheelwright sadly. "Dost thou really think the Quarterly Meeting would send her?"

"I believe it will. If not, I'll pay myself. Thou art willing, Lydia?"

"Oh yes, it would be such a relief; but how could she go? To be shut in a stage-coach with strangers would frighten our wild forest bird out of her wits."

"Way will be found," said Eunice, and hastened to her home.

When she laid the case before her brother and their visitor, the latter proposed that before retiring for the night they three should sit in silence before the Lord, and ask for His guidance how they could best help this poor afflicted one.

At breakfast next morning Luke astonished his sister. He, whom she thought so wedded to his farm, actually proposed to drive all the way to York to take Timatha and see Cousin Betsey. "Thou couldst control her on the journey, couldst thou not, Eunice?"

"Oh yes; she enjoys driving so much, and I could sleep with her at the inns."

"How many days would it take, Hannah Wigham? I have a remarkably good horse for long drives now; he never seems to tire."

"I should think you could do it in about

eight days. I know the North Road so well, I can write down the inns and the distances for you."

"Then the sooner the better. We finish haying to-morrow, and the harvest won't be ready for three weeks. Moses Hill can manage without me for that while. Thou thinks there would be room for another female patient without our waiting to hear from the Retreat?"

"Oh yes, I have no doubt of it; and Elizabeth Dale has a large house and is the soul of hospitality."

"Then after we have seen Amos and Lydia, we will write the two letters to say we are coming, and Moses shall take them to meet the mail."

They found that Timatha was worn out by her long day's wandering, and Lydia was keeping her in bed. The proposition was received with the deepest thankfulness, and Eunice went up to propose it to Timatha. Her mind was unusually clear, and she was feeling acutely the sorrow that her last attack had brought to her sister. She was more than willing to go.

"Hannah Wigham says many patients are perfectly cured, so we may have another journey soon to fetch thee back," said Eunice cheerfully.

When she came down Amos said gratefully: "That thou and Luke should take that long, long journey for our poor sister! We do not know how to thank thee, Eunice."

"Why should not we travel in the ministry as well as Hannah Wigham? A minister only means a servant, and there are many kinds of service besides preaching. I assure thee we feel it a privilege, and there is the visit to our dear cousin as well."

The start could not be made for a few days, during which Luke had to drive to a large town in which lived Enoch Brown, the treasurer of the Quarterly Meeting. Eunice resolved to consult him as to the probability of Friends being willing to pay for Timatha in the Retreat. She did not know him well, as he had come from London a few years before, and had taken a large draper's shop, where a stern, elderly housekeeper ruled the household for him.

Eunice was kindly received, and when the nature of her errand was explained, Enoch took her up to a small private parlour over the shop. He listened with much sympathy, and had little doubt the required four shillings a week would be forthcoming.

"I have heard much of William Tuke's concern," he said, "and have already begun to make a collection among Friends for this

blessed house of healing. If it had only been started a dozen years ago!" he went on with deep emotion. "Thou probably never heard, Eunice Beard, of my sweet young wife, Alice? After her baby was born, her poor mind went wrong. It often took three people to hold her, and the doctors insisted on her being strapped to the bed, lest she should do herself an injury. There she lay week after week, screaming and crying, till the neighbours complained bitterly. The doctor gave her much strong medicine and allowed very little food, and she got weaker and weaker till she died, with never a look or word to me or her poor mother, who did not long survive her. The baby, too, was put out to nurse; the foster-mother proved unworthy and neglected it, till it also left me. I could not stay in that house then, and came down into the country."

Eunice's sympathy was always ready when she heard of sorrow, and after a while Enoch Brown asked: "Thou saidst these good Friends are poor? Has the poor afflicted one clothes fit to go to York?"

"I fear not; I mean to consult her sister about that."

"Then come with me."

In the room adjoining was a tall chest of drawers. Enoch unlocked drawer after

drawer all filled with nicely folded womanly garments.

"Take what she needs, my friend," he said; "I will fetch a trunk to pack them in," and he disappeared.

Thankfully Eunice selected the plainest of the gowns, a warm cloak for winter, underclothing, caps and kerchiefs. The draper's neat hands aided in their disposal in the trunk.

Then with a sudden impulse he unlocked another drawer. "Thou said the good sister is expecting another little one—take these as a gift to her. Why should things be kept in memory of the dead when there is a living need?"

Eunice saw piles of little garments, exquisitely sewn by the young mother who had hardly recognised her babe. She knew what a boon they would be to Lydia, and with tears in her eyes she helped to make them into a large bundle, with deep pity for the good man so tragically bereaved.

When they stopped to leave the trunk to Lydia's care, Eunice found her busily picking to pieces her well-known First-day gown of brown stuff.

"What art thou doing, my dear?"

"Oh, poor Timatha *must* have neat clothes to go in, and I could spare this gown best, so I am altering it for her."

"Thou mayst just sew it up again, for see how she has been provided for!" and poor Alice's nice garments were displayed, and most thankfully accepted.

So, early one summer morning the trio drove off—Timatha dazed and quiet, but quite willing to go, and the relief of her absence was very great in the wheelwright's home.

It was an anxious journey for Eunice. Every night she locked the door of their room and put the key under her pillow, and many times was she roused by Timatha's plaintive answer to imaginary calls. But the long drives and new scenes had a soothing effect, and her friends were full of hope when they left her under the kind care of George and Catherine Jepson.

The then extremely novel treatment of warm baths was tried, which helped the sleeplessness. Timatha was encouraged to work in the garden and to spin, and George Jepson, who was a weaver by trade, would praise the unusual evenness of her thread.

William Tuke and his daughters would come in the free, friendly way that gave them so much influence and chat to Timatha of her Sussex home and friends, and surely, if slowly, her disordered faculties became clearer and steadier.

When summer came again and Hannah

Wigham journeyed southward to finish the visits to meetings which she had failed to reach the previous year, Timatha was ready to come with her, not only sane, but brighter and happier than she had been for many a year.

She found a home on a Sussex farm, caring for an old couple who needed a housekeeper ; and although her wage was very small, there was always a golden guinea ready when the meeting subscription was made up for York Retreat.

TRANSPORTED

1817

THE garden was gay in the evening sunlight. It was only a narrow slip at the back of a house in Camberwell, but blue iris, wall-flowers, pansies, and double daisies were flourishing, as flowers do that are tended by a loving hand.

It had been a dry season in late spring, and a trim little figure in a gray gown and Quaker cap was busy watering, a young servant bringing her the water from the house.

"Just one more bucketful, please, Rhoda; these white lilies are just forming their buds and need much moisture. They should be at their best when my dear mother and sister return in six weeks' time."

Rhoda brought the water and poured it carefully into the green watering-can.

"That is enough, thank thee; now thou canst return to the wonderful patchwork that thou loves so much," said the lady kindly.

But the girl lingered. "Did I understand, Miss Mary, that the mistress won't be home for six weeks?"

"Yes, Rhoda, they have gone a long way into the West of England, and have many places to visit before we can hope to see them back."

"Then, Miss Mary, I must give my notice to you. I want to leave this day month."

Mary Dudley put down her can in astonishment. "Why, Rhoda, thou hast only been with us three years, and always seemed so contented and happy in our quiet household."

"That's just it, Miss, 'tis *too* quiet, and I want a change," said the girl doggedly.

"I know young people love change, but hast thou thought if it is wise to throw thyself out of place? Being an orphan, thou hast no home to go to, and places are hard to find."

"Oh, that's all right. My cousin, who is head housemaid at my Lord Birkenholt's in London, told me last week the under-housemaid is leaving to be married, and she would speak to the housekeeper for me, and had no doubt she could get me the place."

Mary Dudley looked grave; she knew the name of Lord Birkenholt as one of the Prince Regent's wild associates, and she said: "I do not think thou wouldst find much comfort in a large household of that sort, and thou hast learned to cook so nicely, and seemed so fond of it. Cooking is a good trade, Rhoda, for folks must eat. Is it not a pity to give it up? In a few years thou might be earning

twelve or even fourteen pounds, when thou hast learned a little more about pastry and preserves. If change is what attracts thee, why not wait till we can hear of a cook wanted in some family where we know servants are kindly cared for?"

"I have passed my word to my cousin," said the girl sullenly, and returned to the house.

Mary Dudley finished her gardening, and went in to a plainly furnished back parlour, where on a slippery horsehair sofa her youngest sister lay, wrapped in a large shawl.

"I wonder if this will worry Charlotte," thought kind Mary; "but she will have to know it some time, and does not like me to conceal things from her."

So she gave the story in Rhoda's words, adding: "Of course there are plenty of young maids to be had, and it may be best for me to engage one, but it is a thing I have never done, and I hope mother and sister will be satisfied."

"Oh, dear! I wish they would not take these long journeys," said Charlotte fretfully; "things always go wrong when they are away, and there are not the kind Friends to come in and out every day as we had at Clonmel. I think London is the loneliest place in the world."

Mary, the humblest of good creatures, felt

an inward pang that with all her care she could not make the invalid happy, but she only said soothingly: "We have some kind friends, and shall soon make more, and perhaps it is our part to make it easy for mother and sister to travel in the ministry. They have both been entrusted with so large a gift, and it is such a joy to mother that Betsey has a concern to travel with her. They have been so kind to Rhoda, that it will grieve them to return and find her gone."

"And she seemed such a cheerful, grateful girl, it is very strange she wishes to leave us."

"It is those unsatisfactory relatives of hers in the Borough. Martha Savory told us that when she took Rhoda from the Poorhouse at twelve years old as a little under-maid, she was said to have no relatives whatever; but as soon as she grew up, and was earning wages, this aunt turned up, and has often worked on the girl's kind heart to "lend" her a few shillings, which of course are never returned. Poor Rhoda, I fear she is being led into crooked ways. And she has grown so pretty of late with her curly chestnut hair, which in her position is apt to be only a misfortune. But she is twenty years old, and we have no right to restrain her."

"Thou must warn her of the dangers of

life in the household of such a man," said Charlotte.

"I suppose it is my duty, but mother and sister would do it so much better than poor little me," said the humble-minded Mary.

So after much thought and prayer she faced the task. When the housemaid was out, she went into the clean, comfortable kitchen, and sitting down opposite to Rhoda, who was sewing, she talked kindly of the change it would be in a large household, warning her of any notice which might come from Lord Birkenholt or his associates, and saying that they and her former mistress, Martha Savory, would always be glad to help and advise her.

Rhoda did not feel grateful. She was quite dazzled by the prospect before her, and did not feel as if she was at all likely to need help. So away she went, and no word of her came to the good Dudley family for more than a year.

Mary easily found a steady young cook, wishing to better herself, and quite willing to help the delicate housemaid, Sallie, who had come with the Dudleys from Ireland, in such work as was beyond her strength. In due time the mother and sister returned.

Mary Dudley, the stately old minister, had been a convert and personal friend of John Wesley, and the good man was much aggrieved

when she found a more congenial spiritual home in the quiet ways of Quakerism, and became a leading minister among Friends; as was also her devoted daughter, Elizabeth, a little rigid in her goodness, of whom the younger sisters stood rather in awe. Happily both approved the new maid, and the quiet household of women settled down to the usual round of charities and attendance at Friends' Meetings.

After one of these in London, at which Elizabeth Dudley had spoken with considerable power, that great and good woman, Elizabeth Fry, with the marvellous insight which enabled her to select the right helpers in her works of loving philanthropy, drew the young Irish minister aside. "Canst thou find any concern on thy mind to come with me to Newgate, Elizabeth Dudley?" she said. "It has seemed to me that thy gift is a particularly suitable one for our poor ignorant prisoners there."

"Dost thou really think so? I have never even seen the inside of a prison, and have little idea how it is best to speak to such characters."

"They need the simple Gospel of a Saviour from sin, and the promise of help to live a righteous life to those who repent. They are very attentive now—quiet, clean and civil, quite different from the savages whom

dear Anna Buxton and I had to deal with at our first visits to Newgate. Then there was continual drinking, swearing and gambling —some of them half-naked, for no clothes are provided, and if they have no friends to bring them raiment, they are in terrible need and suffering in cold weather. We procured a bale of green baize from the manufacturers and taught them to make themselves warm gowns, and blue gingham for aprons. We started a little school for the poor children, whom it is grievous to see shut up from air and exercise for their mothers' sin. One of our most hopeful cases, Mary Connel, who I believe has become a true, humble Christian, teaches it very nicely."

Elizabeth Dudley was much interested, and asked many questions about the work, so utterly new for cultured women at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the founder of it all was the gentle, timid mother of many children, who under profound conviction of a Christian call had commenced to visit the neglected prison near her London home.

"What tries me most," said Elizabeth Fry, "is our interviews with the poor creatures who are condemned to death. Believing as I do that man has no right to send his poor fellow mortals to stand before their time at the great Judgment Seat, these interviews

are terribly painful. We can only endeavour to lead them to the One Who alone can wash away sin. Some grasp that hope, but most are so expectant of a reprieve, that they can hardly attend."

"Are there women there under sentence of death now?" said Elizabeth Dudley, shuddering.

"Only one, and she, poor creature, already the mother of six children, is awaiting the birth of a seventh. When that is a month old she will be hanged, as her husband was a few weeks ago. Of course, her great hope is that she may die at her confinement."

"How shocking! What had she done to deserve this terrible punishment?"

"Her husband, a clever rogue, persuaded her to pass a forged one-pound note. She is a simple-minded, decent body, and did not at all realise how wrong it was. And this dreadful death penalty is given her just the same as to a terrible woman who suffered last week, who had deliberately murdered her poor, feeble, old mistress for the sake of her few outward possessions. That woman remained hard and defiant to the last. I cannot tell thee how inexpressibly painful our interviews with her were."

"Cannot these laws which deal death for such various offences be altered?"

"My brother-in-law, Fowell Buxton, and other thoughtful Christians in Parliament are trying hard to get these Acts repealed, but such things move so slowly. Meanwhile we can only try and comfort and help in Newgate. The younger women are the most hopeful, and I feel thy gift, under Divine Guidance, may be very helpful among them."

An appointment was made for the very next morning, and Elizabeth Dudley found herself at the iron-bound gate of Newgate with Elizabeth Fry and her faithful helper, Mary Sanderson.

The turnkey greeted the ladies respectfully, and informed them there were two fresh young women come in, under sentence of transportation. "One looks a decent body, but the other, Sukey Brett, is as bold a hussy as ever I see; she's been a-pulling the other women's caps off, and making no end of a row. Since you ladies have give 'em something to do, we haven't had many such scenes."

They passed on, behind the double grating where prisoners were allowed to see their friends, into a large whitewashed room, where a hundred and fifty women awaited the daily reading—quiet now and respectful, but with faces that told tales of lives of recklessness and vice.

Elizabeth Fry seated herself at a table,

and after a pause with bent head, opened her Bible and began to read a chapter in the Gospels in her beautiful voice, with many simple explanations suited to the ignorance of the majority of her hearers.

Elizabeth Dudley had no difficulty in identifying the new-comers. One had a hard, bold, mocking face, and looked ripe for mischief, although she sat with tolerable quietness. Her companion sat with bent head, her mob cap pulled low over her face, which was farther concealed by her hand. When Elizabeth Dudley rose and gave a short, loving address, followed by a prayer from one of the older workers, the bent shoulders were shaken with sobs, and she thought—"At least one has been tenderly reached to-day."

As the women filed out to their sewing-classes, the irrepressible Sukey suddenly tweaked off the cap of her weeping companion just as she passed Elizabeth Dudley, revealing abundant, curly, chestnut hair and a face only too familiar. The lady took a step forward and said gently: "Rhoda, my poor child, I am grieved to see thee here."

"Oh, Miss Betsey, Miss Betsey! that you can speak kindly to me *now*!" and she clung to the hand held out to her.

A matron, thinking the new visitor was being annoyed, bustled up.

"I have found an old servant of mine here, and should like to talk to her. May she be excused going to the sewing-class to-day?"

Leave was given, and Elizabeth made the poor girl sit beside her, while by degrees she poured out her sad story. It would take too long to tell it in her own words, as bit by bit she confessed to her foolish weakness. The plunge into the gay household of a bachelor nobleman, with a housekeeper efficient enough, but utterly careless of the characters of the under-servants, was enough to turn her head. Rhoda, pretty, lively and willing, was soon popular, and one of the footmen, George Yates, had flattered and befooled her until she would do anything for him, and firmly believed in the pictures of the nice, country inn, where some day they would be host and hostess. Yates was feathering his own nest at his master's expense. Lord Birkenholt, a wealthy, careless man, who was seldom sober after dinner, made it only too easy to do so.

One evening Yates said to Rhoda: "You have to go to my Lord's dressing-room to make up the fire. He borrowed a ten-pound note of me yesterday; he has been to the Bank to-day, and his pocket-book is lying on the table—just take out what he owes me. I have to be waiting in the dining-room, or would do it myself."

Innocent Rhoda, marvelling that her lover was so rich as to lend to his master, did as she was told. But Lord Birkenholt was not drunk that evening; his expected guests failed to come to dinner, he took less wine than usual, and went up to his dressing-room before going out to some place of amusement. Rhoda was coming out, and indignantly turned away from the careless chuck under the chin he gave her in passing. She was stopped in the corridor by the housekeeper with some directions about her work, and in a minute their master came storming out of his room, declaring a note had been taken from his pocket-book, and Rhoda must be searched. At once the housekeeper dived into her capacious pocket, and there indeed was the proof of her guilt. The poor girl's story of Yates having lent the money was scoffed at, and she was bundled off to prison, the cowardly Yates allowing all the consequences of his ill-conduct to fall on the girl whom he had professed to love.

Rhoda, with her decent training, was heart-broken; even the relations who had tempted her from her sheltered home turned against her. "And the judge condemned me to go all alone to the other side of the world," sobbed Rhoda. "It takes months and months in the crowded convict ships, and among

those awful women! You saw that Sukey Brett, Miss Betsey—oh! she is terrible! She drinks and swears, and seems to delight in tormenting me. I have to lie next her at night; we are all in rows on this dirty, bare floor, Miss, with that bit of board for a pillow, and not a stitch of bedclothes; and to think of the nice four-poster Sallie and I had at your house! Oh what a fool I was to leave!"

Elizabeth gave what comfort she could, and told poor Rhoda that even in prison industry and good conduct would tell. She would tell the ladies that the girl could sew and read well, and she might be employed in teaching the more ignorant while she was in Newgate. Elizabeth Fry spoke kindly to her, recognising that rare thing, a true penitent—not for the crime falsely laid upon her, but for her wilful leaving of a good home.

Never was there a more attentive listener to the readings, or a prisoner so diligent in sewing or knitting, in which she began to feel a sort of comfort; but Sukey Brett resented her superiority, and persecuted her outrageously. The Matron and Gaoler complained to Elizabeth Fry, and asked her to speak to the wild, hardened girl, and expecting a scolding she grew more defiant than ever. One day, when her conduct had been worse

than usual, Elizabeth Fry came straight towards her. Sukey put on her most impudent expression, but no scolding came, only two gentle hands laid on her shoulders, the sweep of pure, silken garments, and the kindest of voices, saying: "I hope soon to hear better things of thee."

An overwhelming wave of conviction and repentance swept through the wild girl's heart —that that saintly lady should care for troublesome Sukey Brett! She burst into tears and sobbed wildly, while the gentle voice went on to speak of pardon for sin and help to reform her conduct.

"No one ever spoke to me so before," said the poor girl. "I've never been to school, I had no mother, and I can't sew or read or do anything but sell vegetables in the streets."

"But thou canst learn; here is Rhoda who can teach thee. Ask Matron to allow her to do so."

So the rough ignorant girl, strangely humbled and quieted, became Rhoda's pupil, and in time they were fast friends.

The good visiting ladies tried hard to get the sentence of transportation revoked, knowing too well the miserable method of herding women together on the convict ships, with no other control than an often perfectly

unsuitable surgeon and the captain and rough sailors. But in vain they pleaded Rhoda's previous good character, they could get no remission of the cruel sentence of transportation, and after some months in Newgate, the order came for her and a score of other women prisoners to be transferred to the convict ship *Maria* lying in the Thames off Woolwich.

Such news in former days had meant the wildest outbreak of the victims—every window they could reach was smashed, and forms and tables broken up and burnt. They were conveyed to the boats in open waggons, but the heavy iron shackles on ankle and wrist did not prevent a most uproarious scene, singing and yelling at the top of their voices through the streets of London.

But Elizabeth Fry had been successful in pleading that closed coaches should be used, and promised Rhoda and her companions that if they would go quietly, she and some of the other ladies would go with them to the ship, and see them settled as comfortably as possible. So a long procession of coaches, followed by a carriage full of grey Friends' bonnets, trotted down to Deptford.

One of the ladies stepped on board each of the rowing-boats which carried the prisoners out to the ship. All were quiet and orderly,

and some hours were spent in sorting them out into messes and appointing monitors.

For weeks longer the ship lay anchored in the Thames, and day by day more convict women, heavily ironed and in charge of rough and often brutal warders, came on board. From all parts of the kingdom they came—some speaking only Welsh or Gaelic, or broad Yorkshire equally incomprehensible. Only a very small amount of luggage was allowed, and the ladies found most of the poor creatures and their little children totally lacking in the clothing needed for warmth and decency during the three or four months' voyage.

Daily they visited them, bringing such needfuls as sea-soap and towels, shoes and stockings, and once a huge bale of warm shawls, which would be an unspeakable comfort in the bitter days among the icebergs off Cape Horn.

Elizabeth Fry, with the claims of her large family, could not often visit the ships, but Elizabeth Dudley and Elizabeth Pryor went constantly, trying especially to give hope and encouragement to the Newgate group to keep up the decent ways they had been taught. How to provide employment for so long a time was a puzzle, when someone was inspired to suggest patchwork, as needing little space and taking much time and ingenuity.

An appeal to the Manchester warehouses in London brought abundance of pieces of print and linen, and Rhoda and the more advanced joyfully undertook to see it made into quilts, and also to the due distribution of knitting materials.

To have something ready to sell to the Colonists immediately they landed was impressed upon the women as most desirable, for no money gifts were permitted, and, incredible as it seems to us now, a hundred years ago these poor bewildered women were just put ashore in a strange land, where the inhabitants were of the roughest, without a penny to pay for a lodging!

A school for the children and women who desired to learn was also arranged, Bibles and suitable books provided, and when the last day came Elizabeth Fry herself came on board, and standing on the deck surrounded by the women, with the rigging above full of curious sailors, she read aloud the 117th Psalm, dwelling on the words, "They that go down to the sea in ships." Then she knelt, and all the weeping women fell on their knees, while the voice which had brought to them the message of hope commended them to the loving and forgiving Father in Heaven for time and for eternity.

Elizabeth Dudley took kind leave of Rhoda,

with gifts from her mother and sisters of books, a little tea and sugar, and some writing paper and pens, so that she might let them know how she had fared.

Many months after came a letter, rather ill-spelt, and incoherent in her gratitude, telling dear Miss Betsey that she had sold a patchwork quilt at Rio for a whole guinea, when the ship put in there for fresh water and provisions, and also a number of pairs of children's socks. So that on being landed at Paramatta she and Sukey Brett had money to pay for a decent lodging, and both had secured respectable places of service. Rhoda was to go up country with a young sheep-farmer's wife and her infant—" and you know, Miss, I always loved babies."

Years passed, and once again Rhoda wrote to report that she was most happily married to a good man who had never been a convict, had " a good home, plenty of pigs and fowls, and buy my tea by the chest." She concluded with the words, " I still have the Bible you gave me, and I read it daily, and when I lay my sweet baby Betsey down to rest on the patchwork quilt I made on the voyage, I don't know how to be grateful enough to you and all the good ladies who helped me out of the horrible pit that my own foolish wilfulness had led me into.'

THE BEE MISTRESS

1830

"It hardly seems decent to me, Prue, a marriage with neither parson nor ring, and not even your own brother to give you away! I should have thought it was against the law of the land."

"Oh no, sister Delia, the Society of Friends have married in this simple way for over a hundred years. We need no human priest when we take each other, as we reverently believe in the presence of the great Head of the Church. And I earnestly hope Brother Thomas will come with me, even if thou canst not leave the children."

"How I shall manage those children without their Auntie I can't imagine, and so fond of them as you have always been! And now you are ready to give them up for a pale-faced whipper-snapper like Ben Vine, just because he is a Quaker! He looks so sickly that we shall have you back on our hands as a young widow one of these days."

Prudence Carfrey looked grave. "I know Benjamin is not strong," she admitted, "but

he has worked very hard in the shop, and had little comfort and bad cooking in his lodging. I trust in our cottage overlooking the heath, and with me to look after him, he may be better."

"And to think you might have had George Greenwood, with the biggest farm and finest hop-garden in the parish, and yet you take up with this beggarly Quaker! They made a mistake when they christened you Prudence!"

The girl laughed happily. "I feel I *am* prudent to have chosen a sweet-tempered, God-fearing man, sister! George Greenwood drinks and swears, and I am sorry for his poor young wife. My joining Friends quite stopped his attentions to me."

"Well, I hope you won't live to repent it," said Delia Carfrey; and picking up a crawling baby from the floor, she went off to see what mischief her five elder children were perpetrating in the garden.

The loss of her capable young sister-in-law was a grave one to Delia. Naturally indolent and hasty-tempered, although kind-hearted enough, she found the care of her household and children very irksome, and selfishly desired to retain her responsible unpaid servant.

Prudence sat still, sewing diligently on the grey stuff gown in which she was to be married at Burgate Meeting in a fortnight's time.

She knew Delia's only idea of a wedding was a time of feasting and uproarious mirth, so she preferred to be married from the house of quiet, motherly Abigail Lester in the market town eight miles away.

Naturally sober and thoughtful, Prudence had grown up in the house of her brother, for she lost her parents when a child. Twelve years before our story opens he had married Delia, and although they had never quarrelled, her love of noisy pleasure and her careless, slovenly housekeeping were sadly depressing. The children were heartily loved by their young aunt, and they were left much to her. Of outside help she had little; the village church was utterly neglected by the absent rector, an ill-paid curate riding over from the town to take the solitary service on Sunday.

One day when Prudence was about twenty, she was wending her way to the church from some sense of duty, but expecting little help from the carelessly read service, when an elderly woman, whom she knew slightly as the wife of a Quaker farmer in the village, followed a " leading " to invite the sad-looking young girl to a meeting, at which one of the leading ministers was to be present. Prudence consented, and seated in the plain little Meeting House found an atmosphere

entirely new to her. The intense earnestness of the speaker, whom she knew was unpaid, and a business man in touch with the ordinary needs of life, was a revelation to her. Here was true sincerity, here was the prospect of fellowship; and the lonely girl felt she had found a spiritual home.

Her brother, a busy, indifferent man, cared little, but Delia stormed and sneered in vain. To assume the Quaker cap and use the "thee and thou" to all comers was not easy in such a household, but Prudence had plenty of "grit," and quietly lived down opposition. In the dairy and poultry yard, and the care of the children, she was more unselfishly diligent than ever, only occasionally claiming the privilege to absent herself to attend the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings. Here she had met Benjamin Vine, the chief assistant in a large grocer's shop, and the acquaintance soon ripened to warm love.

It was far from a brilliant match, but Ben had a little store of savings, and Prudence some furniture and house-linen; so they took a cottage with a large garden on the outskirts of Burgate, and after the simple marriage ceremony walked quietly home together.

To Prudence the year that followed was ideal happiness. The quietness after her brother's noisy household, the independence

to carry out her neat, thrifty ways, the perfect accord in best things with her husband, and his loving care and delight in her society, seemed almost too sweet for this world.

The time of happiness was but short. Early in the second spring Benjamin came home in great pain; the doctor could only pronounce it "internal inflammation," for what modern medical skill can cope with was then a mystery. Through the few sorrowful days that Ben lay patiently suffering the Burgate Friends came to the aid of the young wife. Kind Abigail Lester was there night and day, and when the pain was stilled for ever, she was the loving helper of the desolate widow.

But Prudence was not one of those who cannot bow before a storm. Her faith rose with her sore need, and she "sorrowed not as others who have no hope." When only a week after the funeral a little daughter came to her, she received the gift as a sweet consolation, not as a burden, as Delia hinted, and named her Benjamina after the father whose loving care she would never know.

Her brother and sister offered that Prudence should return to the old home, but that she felt was impossible, only consenting to go for a visit until she could see her way to making a living. She had enough for present

needs, and declined to give up her cottage by the heath. She felt that it would be impossible to train up her child rightly among the cousins, who had run wild during the eighteen months since she left the farm. Prudence felt sure a way would open for her to earn an honest living. She was an excellent needlewoman, and while at her brother's house an accident introduced her to another source of revenue.

She was standing at the farm-house door on a sunny April day, with her six-weeks-old daughter in her arms, watching her three nephews, who in a wild mood were chasing each other round the garden.

"Will! Tom! not so near the beehives!" she called.

But the caution was too late: Will had tripped and fallen against a hive, turning over the stool. Down rolled the skep, and out rushed the offended bees ready to wreak vengeance on the destroyers of their home.

"Run away, boys, among the bushes!" shouted Prudence, as a swarm of angry insects attacked her perfectly innocent self. Instinctively she covered her baby with her bare arm, as five furious stings were inflicted on it and three on her face. She rushed into the kitchen, laid Baby Mina in the large wicker cradle, threw a tablecloth over

it, and ran out again to the garden, where yells of pain and fright were resounding. Twisting her apron over her head, she set up the stool and the heavy skep upon it so quickly that no fresh sting reached her; then, diving among the currant bushes, she eluded the pursuing bees. As she came out the other side of the garden she saw Delia standing on the grass plot, vainly fighting the enemy with five screaming children clinging to her skirts.

Will, the guilty party, had had presence of mind to obey his aunt's instructions, and was the only one who had escaped.

"Round through the lilac bushes, Delia!" called Prudence, catching up the nearest child, and soon she had the miserable party in the back kitchen and was flicking off the bees that hung on their clothing and hair. Tom had a sting on the tip of his little freckled nose, another on his forehead, and on both hands; five-year-old Robert had really fared worse, for as he stared open-mouthed at the catastrophe a bee had stung him on the tongue. Each little girl had two or three stings, but poor Delia had suffered most. Her face, her head, and her bare arms were savagely attacked as she tried to beat off the bees, and she was quite hysterical with pain and fright.

Prudence gave her a drink of water, and then set about finding remedies to allay the intolerable smart, first squeezing out the barbed weapons left in the flesh by the warriors who had died for their commonwealth. Raw onion, soda, the bluebag, were all tried, but had little effect, and by the time Thomas Carfrey came in from his work swelling had begun, and they were indeed a pitiful sight. Poor Delia's eyes were nearly closed, and little Robert's tongue was so enlarged that they seriously feared the child would be suffocated.

Thomas fetched the doctor, who sent them all to bed to keep as cool and quiet as possible. Giving his directions, he suddenly exclaimed: "Why, Mrs. Vine, you are stung too! There are two stings in your chin at this moment."

"Are there?" said Prudence. "I really have been so busy I have not felt them."

The doctor extracted the stings, saying as he did so: "There is not the least sign of swelling. It is so with a few constitutions. You are evidently designed by nature to be a Bee Mistress."

Baby Mina had peacefully slumbered under her tablecloth all through the disturbance, but she now claimed her mother's attention, and a busy time had Prudence with so many to care for, although Willie, well knowing

that the fault was his, did his very best to help, rocking the baby, and waiting on his mother and the little ones.

All night long Prudence sat by little Robert, and often the doctor's words came back to her. Could she not take up the trade of a Bee Mistress? The farm bees had always been handled by the old foreman, but she knew a good deal about them, and had been interested in their ways and management.

In the morning Robert was better, and able to take spoonfuls of warm milk, but his mother was miserably feverish and perfectly blind from the swelling. Her anger with the bees was almost comical.

"The horrible beasts! to sting my poor little children! I will have them all smothered! It is not safe to have them in the garden—such vicious things! Willie has been stung twice before, when Barnes was attending to them. Thomas must get rid of them at once!"

"You would miss the honey for sweetening, especially the bullace pies," said Prudence.

"I'll have the bullace-trees cut down, for I really couldn't afford sugar to cook with them; but anyway, the bees must go. I should miss more not having honey for making metheglin. It is just the proper compliment to pass round at christenings, and when our

friends come to see us at Christmas; but I have a good cask in the cellar, which will last some time."

Prudence was silent. She had often assisted in the brewing of the honey wine, with its many ingredients—sweetbriar, violets and rosemary, carraway, cinnamon and musk being among them—but she had noticed that even her silent brother became noisy and foolish after drinking the strongly alcoholic stuff; and although, like all her generation, she believed in the absolute necessity of malt liquors, and regarded brandy as a suitable medicine for every ill that flesh is heir to, she had felt that metheglin was not a desirable drink.

Prudence went downstairs and looked out of the kitchen window. There stood the four skeps, the one which had been overturned as peacefully busy as the rest. When Thomas came in for his dinner she offered to buy them.

"I could give thee a guinea for them—the old saying is that bees must be paid for in gold, although I have no faith in such superstitions," she said.

"I'll give them to you, Prue, gladly, as the missus is determined to get rid of them."

"No, I thank thee, brother, I should prefer to buy them. I really think on the edge of the heath, with the white clover

fields behind and the great avenue of limes at Burgate Hall, it will be an excellent place for them."

"Do you think we can move them without breaking the combs?"

"Oh yes, if thou wilt drive walking pace when thou takes me home next week."

With the help of old Barnes, Prudence prepared the bees for removal. A long sharp skewer of wood was run through each skep, holding the winter toughened combs in their place, and the night before her departure each colony was securely tied in a coarse linen cloth. Delia saw them depart with joy, for although her face had resumed its normal size, and little Robert was as merry as ever, she was quite determined never to have bees in her garden again.

The settling in of her new possessions was a real help to Prudence in the sad return to the home that had been so happy. With a thick hedge to the northward the bees were well established, and soon were busy in the early fruit blossom in the gardens around.

Abigail Lester did not like her young friend to be quite alone in the cottage with her infant, and suggested that Ann Gibbs, a gentle, elderly Friend, much crippled with rheumatism, whom the overseers of the meeting had endowed with the magnificent sum of

five shillings a week, should live with her, which Prudence thankfully accepted. The baby was the joy of their lives, and "Grannie Gibbs" could take care of her while her mother was busy; and whether it was change of air, or Prudence's good cooking of their simple meals, the old lady revived wonderfully, and became more active and efficient than she had ever hoped to be again.

Needlework came in plenty. The more well-to-do Friends gave it at first out of sympathy, but when they found how exquisitely the sets of shirts and baby-linen were made, Prudence had quite as much sewing as she could do.

But next to little Mina, the bees were her great interest. It was a sunny summer, and they flourished exceedingly, sending out many swarms. One or two of these sailed right away over the tree-tops, in spite of her energetic clanging on a tin pan, but she soon had a dozen skeps at work. Perfectly fearless, Prudence went among them, shaking the swarms from the apple boughs into the skeps with face and arms quite unprotected.

Like all bees, they had a habit of swarming on Sunday, and often when she and Ann Gibbs returned from Meeting (where they sat near the door in case Baby Mina should be wakeful) she would find a brown mass,

like a large bunch of grapes, hanging in some tree, awaiting her hand to introduce them to a new home.

She soon concluded that the customary "ringing the bees" at swarming time had no effect whatever on the insects themselves, but was useful in showing from whose garden the flying swarm had come. Several cottagers around the heath kept bees, and many were the bits of advice given to the young Bee Mistress, which ancient lore, being endowed with a plentiful stock of common sense, she judged carefully before she made use of.

Many prescriptions for dressing new hives with bean-leaves, milk and salt, oak twigs, sugar and beer were given her, although in Sussex nothing quite so repulsive was used as the old Cornish custom of endowing each new colony with a pilchard, as if bees were likely to take kindly to a diet of stale fish!

Prudence would use nothing but a spoonful of honey rubbed into the straw, which she felt would give the new dwelling a homelike savour.

Some rumour reached her of the usefulness of double hives, so cutting a round hole in the top of the skep of one of her strongest stocks, she put a smaller one above it, and found to her delight that it was soon filled with beautiful golden combs of virgin honey.

Cutting this out carefully, she sold the best pieces to housekeepers who appreciated honeycomb, and the rest was strained through a coarse cloth. The apothecary in the town was a constant customer, and it was a common sight in the street to meet the young Bee Mistress, in a neat, home-made Quaker bonnet, trundling a wicker wagon, with a rosy baby at one end and a large jar of honey at the other.

She persuaded the old potter, who came round with his load of pans and pitchers of red Sussex ware, to make jars for her of a special size and shape, in which to sell her sweet produce. It was at the time when the conscience of Friends was stirred against the use of slave-made sugar. Some contrived to get free-grown sugar, and served it in the basins, now cherished heirlooms in several Quaker families, bearing the inscription, " The sugar in this basin is not the produce of slaves, but of free men." But with others honey was much in demand for the sweetening of fruit, and even of tea. So when Quarterly Meeting was held at Burgate many of the chaises went away with a good jar of Prudence Vine's honey wedged between the luggage, and orders came from London for jars to be sent by the carrier who passed the heath cottage three times a week.

Fortunately little Benjamina inherited her mother's constitution, and was never troubled by swelling, for bees will sting sometimes, in thundery weather, and when their honey is taken—and who can blame them?

As time went on a fine flock of geese grazed on the heath, as carefully tended as the bees, and a couple of fat pigs were in the sty. All meant hard work for Prudence, but she was young and strong, and gloried in her honourable independence.

Rainy summers came occasionally, with few shining hours for the little busy bees to improve; but the rent was always ready, and a sufficiency of simple food and clothing for mother and child.

She earned something by handling the bees of her neighbours, who were more fearful of the stings, and in time hired a small paddock which joined her garden to make room for what had become a considerable apiary.

If frame hives and sections and extractors were not invented, neither was the Isle of Wight disease, and Prudence Vine's bees were always healthy, and year by year she grew more content that she had taken up the calling of a Bee Mistress.

NOT MIGHTY OR NOBLE

1863 to 1875

"I've got to go to tea at Cousin Caroline's down in the village," said a big schoolboy gloomily.

"I thought the old girl always gave you a good spread," said his chum, as he skilfully put in the last stitches on a crewelled hard ball, a popular employment in Friends' schools in the sixties.

"The spread is all right, but this time that new red-headed brat on the girls' side is going too—cousin, or something—Miss Hannah Maria Hamborough," said the first boy with deep disgust.

"I should have thought you would like to meet your cousin," said Edward Banks, to whom girls were no rarities, as he had two sisters and five cousins with whom he had the right to promenade on the broad walk between the two school playgrounds.

"She is no cousin of mine, thank goodness!" was the reply of this gallant gentleman. "She comes of Cousin Caroline's mother's people, and I of her father's; but I have got to put up with her for this one evening," and

the boy lounged off with the scant grace of overgrown fifteen.

In the opposite wing a little maiden two years younger was also in a state of trepidation, while she sewed a clean tucker into her best grey merino frock.

"It's a treat to go out to tea, you know, from school," said a more experienced girl consolingly, "and I have heard Caroline Collins is very kind; I have only seen her at meeting myself. Her old gardener draws her there in a wheeled chair, for she cannot walk at all. It must be a nice change for her to have a girl to tea—you will cheer her up."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of *her*—she is Mamma's cousin; but she has asked a great, huge boy as well, and I'm terrified of boys," almost sobbed Hannah Maria, who was an only child, and knew little of the species. However, by the time the best frock was on, the clean, white stockings and little grey, cashmere boots, laced at the side, and a broad, black velvet snood around the closely cropped, too brilliant red-gold hair, she cheered up, and trotted off in the winter twilight to the pleasant cottage in the village, where Cousin Caroline dwelt.

The "huge boy" was there before her, and the unwilling hands had to meet; but their cousin was used to shy young people, and soon made them at home.

"Thy name is Hannah Maria, my dear? That is rather long for every-day use—hast thou no shorter name?"

"Mamma calls me Nannie, and I like it; but Papa and Governess do not approve of nicknames."

"But I like them for little people, so Nannie thou must be, as Richard here is Dick in private life. I have been thinking of a happy summer I spent at Weymouth with your two mothers, who happened to be there at the same time. Look here, these are what they painted for my album," and she opened a square book of embossed leather and showed two old-fashioned paintings. Dick's mother's performance depicted a prim little basket of moss-rosebuds and forget-me-nots, but the other was a sea-shell, with a background of delicate red sea-weeds, which showed some originality, and both children examined them with interest.

The old servant appeared with the tea, and Cousin Caroline set Dick to cut the bread, and Nannie to toast it at the bright fire. Next the teapot must be filled from the bright copper kettle with a handle of golden-green glass. The toast and butter—a treat in itself—was farther enriched with anchovy paste from a little china box with a gay picture on the lid. There was choice of delicious quince jelly

and strawberry jam, and both children thawed considerably over the pleasant meal.

Then said Cousin Caroline: "Perhaps, Dick, thou wouldst fetch the glass of wine I always offer my visitors the first time they come to see me."

Poor Nannie! her eyes grew large with alarm as Dick came back, bearing a wine-glass on a small waiter.

"Now drink Cousin Caroline's health," he said solemnly, proffering the ruddy liquid.

"Oh, please, I can't—we never have wine in my home—Mamma would not like it," she stammered.

"Then it must be turned over on the table-cloth," said the boy.

That beautiful, glossy damask—it would be ruined with port wine! And Nannie's hands instinctively clutched at the glass. But Richard was too quick for her, and it was upside down before her—but no stain appeared; and the boy burst into a roar of laughter in which his cousin joined, as Nannie, lifting the vessel, found the simulated port as hard glass as the cup that contained it! She also joined in the merriment, and after that the ice was finally broken. Games followed—writing games, in which the silver-haired lady with the Quaker cap and white shawl and the red-haired little maiden vied

with each other in humorous verses; and even the schoolboy produced something, each extraordinary attempt at rhyme being an occasion for fresh laughter.

The evening passed so quickly, that all were quite surprised when two of the teachers from the girls' side, who had also had tea in the village, called to take the little maiden home, and being great friends were quite content to let the children follow them in the bright moonlight, chatting in the most friendly manner, until "Good-night, Nannie," was said at the dividing door, and "Good-night, Dick," was answered in a tone which showed the "great, huge boy" had lost his terrors.

It was long before the days of co-education, and the pair seldom met. Dick saw the red head among the most active in games on the girls' playground, or Nannie would note his tall figure and broad shoulders, as the boys filed into meeting, but that was all. Both were good scholars; and having been taught in well-managed homes to be obedient and honourable, took good places with both teachers and schoolfellows.

School-life in the sixties had far less of pressure than at present, being quite untroubled by outside examinations, and few events broke the monotony of work and play during the year. Twice on Sundays, and on

Thursday mornings, the whole school of boys and girls decorously walked to the Meeting House, and sat for an hour and a half on the old-fashioned benches. Few felt this a hardship—it was a matter of course in most of their homes, and to even the liveliest spirits the change from the noise and bustle of school was a rest and relief. That the thoughts in all the young heads were strictly edifying cannot be asserted, but it did none of them harm to have to sit still and think sometimes.

The ministry of that meeting was not inspiring. The Superintendent (as the Head Master was called in those days) almost invariably preached—good sermons enough, but rather too much a matter of course, and the very familiarity of his sonorous voice made it easy not to listen. Now and then a few words of loving counsel came from Caroline Collins's wheel-chair, and two old countrymen, whose broad dialect was almost incomprehensible to the children whose homes were in towns, occasionally spoke, but visitors were few and far between.

Soon after our story begins, in a distant county, two men were discussing an event which was to have its influence on the young life of the school.

By a blazing fire in a large parlour handsomely furnished, but which no woman's hand

had rendered homelike, sat a large, rather pompous, elderly man, wrapped in a warm dressing-gown. His companion, who was much younger, had come to bring news to the invalid, but some of his information was eminently unsatisfactory.

"I wish *I* had been at the Monthly Meeting," he said. "It was most unfortunate that this attack of bronchitis kept me at home at this season. With a little guidance the meeting would have been enabled to prevent so weak a brother as Ambrose Gell from receiving a minute for 'travelling in the ministry.'"

"I am sorry that thou disapproves, Cousin Thomas," said the younger man; "but if thou hadst been present, I think thou wouldst have felt with us that his concern was a very deep one, so that we could not take the responsibility of discouraging it."

"I daresay, I daresay; the man is earnest enough, but frothy, Cousin Samuel—frothy, and very crude in some of his views. I do not like to see him take out his pocket Bible when he is preaching—the way he turns the leaves savours of a sermon manufactured beforehand."

"Few men know their Bibles from cover to cover as Ambrose Gell does; it is easy to him to turn to any passage which he feels is the appropriate message to the meeting."

The elder man shook his head and repeated: "A weak brother. I never understood how it was he was recorded a minister. It was done before he came to live amongst us, but I have heard that his communications were very unacceptable in some of the larger meetings he has attended."

"So I have heard, but it seems to me some Friends are too critical. Ambrose speaks himself of the smallness of his gift with real humility, and wonders that this call to preach the Gospel in the meetings attended by our Friends' Schools was laid upon him, but he has tried the fleece wet and dry, and could not escape from the conclusion that he is being rightly put forth. I feel myself that his very simplicity may be helpful in speaking to the young hearts of the children."

"Soundness is more than simplicity," said Thomas. "As I said before, the little man is frothy, frothy. Let us hope he will be restrained from doing much harm among the hopeful youth of our Society in the Schools."

Samuel Brown had an amused twist in the corner of his mouth as he rose to say farewell. He was thinking that few had less conception of the needs and mentality of the hopeful youth than the ponderous bachelor Elder, his Cousin Thomas.

So Ambrose Gell, armed with his "Minute

for Service in the Meetings attended by our Schools," started on his travels.

The Sunday that he was expected was a momentous one for Nannie Hamborough, for it was her first time to read aloud to the whole assembled family of teachers and scholars.

The excellent custom of one boy and one girl taking part in this weekly gathering and learning by practice to read the Bible aloud with clearness and dignity has been invaluable to many; but it could not fail to be rather alarming to the more shy and retiring natures.

The Superintendent, Charles Coles, was very particular that it should be well done. Early in the week he gave a slip of paper to the boy and girl selected, telling them to read over the chapter chosen by him and to meet John Drake, the elderly elocution master, in the large reading-room on Saturday evening. Thither, in great trepidation, went Nannie, and found to her relief that Richard, almost her sole acquaintance on the boys' side, was to be her companion.

John Drake, commonly called "Daddles," was a little late, and the two talked in friendly fashion till he appeared. Nannie confided her fears: "Oh, I hope I shan't break down," she said. "I know the chapter almost by heart—it is about the woman of Samaria—

and Governess has said I read well; but before all those boys——"

"Pooh! *they* won't take any notice," said Dick, with fraternal frankness. "Don't they hear a new girl every Sunday? And if she reads straight on, and don't burst out howling, as Ted Banks' youngest sister did, they take it all as a matter of course. I read first, so you will get used to being on the platform before your turn comes."

"Which chapter have you to read?"

"Isaiah 53rd. Don't know as I ever heard it before, but I have read it through several times."

Here "Daddles" appeared in a great bustle, and sending the two children on to the platform, he seated himself at the back and gave them very valuable hints as to voice and pronunciation; each standing at the desk with the great Bible, and reading slowly and carefully, their voices echoing strangely in the large empty room.

They heard that evening that the visiting minister had arrived, but none of the children saw him then, which was just as well, for Nature had been singularly unkind to poor Ambrose Gell. He was barely five feet in height, with long arms which looked out of all proportion. His grizzled hair, thinning with age, did not take the form of a decent

tonsure of baldness, but was in odd-shaped woolly tufts. His eyes did not match, and he was painfully shy and diffident.

When he arrived at the school, late on Saturday evening, Charles Coles, the Superintendent, whose guest he was, found him by no means easy to entertain. He had no small talk, and had an exaggerated fear of giving trouble. Next morning, when going off to give the early Bible lesson, Charles Coles put the visitor in his study, telling him he would be quite undisturbed till meeting-time.

Seldom has an hour been spent in such humble entreaty for help and guidance—for the power of the Divine Spirit to overcome the personal weaknesses of which he was so painfully conscious; but help and comfort came, and when seated in the gallery he was able to look calmly into the many scores of bright young faces before him. Richard Clavering mentally pronounced him "a rum-looking little beggar," but when he rose to speak the intense earnestness of his message soon captured his attention.

The opening text was the first verse of Romans 12th: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Appealing to the children, he enlarged on the mercies which had encompassed their young lives, on the crowning mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ coming to live and to die for the sake of every one of them, for the nineteenth-century school boy and girl as much as for the disciples who were with Him in His earthly life.

Would not they give themselves, their lives, their best service, to the Master? It was the reasonable demand of Him Who had loved them and given Himself for them.

The preacher went on to say he had a strong conviction that there was one present who just needed to throw himself at the foot of the Cross, and take the new life so freely offered, and that he might become a mighty power in helping forward Christ's Kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Richard listened with a beating heart. He was by no means a thoughtless boy—he knew what it was to feel a Power not his own, guiding and helping; but he was such a poor sort of fellow, and his parents and two elder brothers were so hopelessly good, he had felt it impossible that he should ever live up to their standard, but this way of stating Divine truth was new to him. He had never presented his living sacrifice, never claimed a personal share

in the life and death of the Lord Jesus. Surely this call, given through the visiting Friend, was to him, and in the long silence that followed the boy prayed as he had never prayed before: "Take me, Lord, forgive my sins, and make me Thy faithful servant all my life."

A strange peace and joy stole over his spirit, and the meeting ended for him in thankfulness and praise.

Meanwhile on the girls' side a similar experience came to the much more simple and childish mind of Nannie Hamborough. She had been well taught in religious knowledge, and had often "tried to be good," but it always ended in discouragement, and games and lessons were so very absorbing. But Ambrose Gell's message brought new light—that she, little childish Nannie, was invited to come into the Father's House and dedicate herself to His service was so wonderful! A few qualms came—would she have to leave her parents and go out as a missionary? Or (awful prospect!) would she have to be a minister herself if she responded to the call? But better thoughts prevailed: "Oh, I am so young and foolish, but, dear Lord Jesus, I *do* want to be Thy child, now and always."

Ambrose Gell's concluding prayer, as the children stood with bent heads, seemed to carry the needs of each up to the Great, White

Throne, and quiet and awestruck they passed out with their fellows. To both the duties of the rest of the day went by like a dream.

At the appointed time in the evening they went on to the platform to read. Each had read well on Saturday, but what new meanings the sacred words had to them that Sunday evening! Richard could hardly control his voice as he read, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." That chapter would be one of his most cherished possessions all the rest of his life.

To Nannie also her chapter was full of new meaning: "Whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." Had she not that day had her first taste of that Living Water? A thrill of joy passed through her at the promise of future blessing.

There was no singing in Friends' Schools of the sixties, but John Ford's admirable collection of hymns was in common use, and the children learned them by heart and repeated them together. That evening the two chosen were, "Just as I am, without one plea," and "I heard the voice of Jesus say."

By some they would be rejected as too emotional, but there are moments in life when emotion is needed, and to Richard and

Nannie that Sunday evening every word in which their voices joined came from the very depths of their young hearts. It never occurred to either of them to speak of their new-found sacred joy. Richard's first apprehension of Christian duty was to soundly cuff a small boy who drew a caricature of Ambrose Gell on the blackboard, telling him not to be a senseless cad ; but that night in the dormitory, where open habits of prayer had been unknown, Dick for the first time knelt down by his bed. There was an awed silence, for he was much respected by his fellows, and after a minute three more of the boys followed his example, one at least bitterly reproaching himself for cowardice in having neglected his mother's plea that he would never be ashamed to pray.

Nannie became more scrupulously honest in "giving herself marks," the children in Friends' Schools being trusted to keep their own record, to the great astonishment of an Inspector from the outside world. She further began quietly and happily to set about her Father's business : the lame teacher's books were always carried for her ; a dull and unpopular girl was drawn into games and cheerful companionship ; a forlorn ten-year-old, whom some family emergency had sent to school in the middle of the term, was mothered and comforted.

How little the two good mothers at home

realised the tremendous worth to their children of the event mentioned in their next letters. Nannie wrote: "Ambrose Gell was at our meeting on Sunday, we did like him so much"; at which Mrs. Hamborough said, with an amused smile, "Children are easily pleased with someone fresh!" Richard's letter stated: "We have had a visit here from Ambrose Gell. He is a jolly good sort." His mother's only comment was, "Dick's one adjective! The idea of calling that queer little man 'jolly'!"

Dick and Nannie did not meet again until the middle of the autumn, when Cousin Caroline invited each to bring a favourite schoolfellow to assist at her apple-gathering. It was a brilliant warm September day, and the tea-table, loaded with good things, was set among the trees, from which the four active young people had been picking the beautiful, rosy and streaked fruit, under the superintendence of the old gardener, and storing it in the loft. Under such circumstances a small joke goes a long way, and Cousin Caroline joined from her wheeled chair in the frequent bursts of laughter from her bright young guests.

All his life Richard Clavering looked back on that afternoon as the last day of his childhood. Next morning he was called out of school by the Superintendent.

"I have sad news for thee, my dear boy," he said gently: "thy father is seriously ill, and thy mother has telegraphed for thee to come without delay. Go and change thy clothes. Matron is packing thy bag. There is just time to catch the 11.45 train. I will take thee to the station myself."

Poor Dick! half dazed with the sudden sorrow he did as he was bid—no time for good-byes—no time to think at all. Sarah Coles pressed a nice packet of provisions into his great-coat pocket, and he was in the train alone, speeding away for his distant home and dreading what he should find there. But the boy's heart turned to the very present help in trouble, and it was a manly, thoughtful helper that he proved himself to his mother during the week that his father lived after his return. The sick man was mostly unconscious, but Richard had the joy of one bright smile of loving recognition before he passed away.

School-days were over. Richard was nearly sixteen. One brother was in America, the other married in a distant town. Mrs. Clavering was a good deal of an invalid and could not be left alone. The boy's ambition had been to learn engineering, but when a Friend who had a large ironmonger's shop near by offered to take him as apprentice, he could

not resist his mother's wistful look, and consented, throwing his energy into his work in a sober, steady fashion, and spending his scanty leisure in cheering and helping her in her loneliness.

Years passed, until the mother died and the old home was broken up. Richard's master had young sons coming into the business, and did not require his help. He heard of an opening in a similar line in Lower Luxford, in the shop and agricultural implement factory of an elderly Friend, who might in time take a younger partner with such a modest amount of capital as Richard could bring. In the good old way he was made at home with James and Mary Lake, who had no children, and the gentle considerateness learned in his mother's service soon rendered him beloved by them.

He was quite a stranger in Luxford, but with the comfortable Freemasonry which prevails among Quakers, he was welcomed into a pleasant circle. Some enthusiastic young men drew him into their Adult School work and other wholesome and helpful interests, and he found one old schoolfellow in Edmund Stanbridge, a young farmer who lived three miles from the town.

One winter day, when the hills were covered with snow which had frozen until the roads

were like glass, Edmund walked in on an errand, and invited Dick to return with him to skate on their private mere. "The townspeople go to Upper Luxford Mere because it is bigger, but all the young Friends have a standing invitation to come to us when they want to skate. My brother and sisters are planning to have tea on the ice. Do come, Dick."

"I don't think I can be spared," said Dick, glancing at James Lake.

"Oh yes, thou canst—I'm not worn out yet," said the old man, laughing. "I used to be a skater myself, and thou hast earned a holiday; get thy skates and go along with Edmund, but come back by nine o'clock, or the mistress will think thou art drowned."

With hearty thanks the young men started, and their vigorous steps soon brought them to the sheet of ice, several acres in extent, surrounded with beds of reeds which rustled in the frosty air. Already a dozen young people were skimming over the surface, and as soon as Richard's skates were on, one and another came up to greet him.

"I am so glad you could join us," said Claudia Welland, a clever woman some years his senior. "Luxford Friends are great on skating. Even Hannah Hamborough cannot resist that temptation. Oh, I forgot, you do

not know her—she has been away with her parents at Torquay ever since you came to town;" and as just then an active figure skimmed by with a great knot of chestnut plaits under a jaunty sealskin cap, she said: "Come, Hannah, I want to introduce a new Friend who has come to Lower Luxford—Richard Clavering."

Up came the girl with outstretched hand. "Why, it is Richard, whom I last saw gathering Cousin Caroline's apples!"

"Can it be the little Nannie that I remember—so scared of the school reading?"

"So you knew each other before," said Claudia, surprised.

"We were at school together when I was quite a little girl," said Nannie. "It must be fully ten years ago. I well remember," she went on in a lower voice, "how sorry we all were when we heard you had been called away by so sad a cause."

"Thank you," said Richard; "I had the consolation of finding my dear father living, but I felt as if I left my boyhood behind at the old school. Did you stay there much longer?"

"Nearly three years. Oh, I love the place! and go back there whenever I can."

They skated slowly round the mere, chatting of the old days, and then joined the merry

circle of the Stanbridges and their friends. The ice was perfect; the air so still that the cold was hardly felt, as the red sun sank, a great white moon rose over the eastern hill. A grand fire was built near the bank with dead wood from a neighbouring copse, and baskets unpacked. Mrs. Stanbridge knew the keenness of skating appetites, and the substantial sandwiches and home-made buns vanished with speed. Was ever tea so delicious as that handed round in tin mugs and stirred with a hazel twig?

Much refreshed, they returned to the ice, trying to play games, "terza" and "touch last," and taking lessons from the more proficient in "outside edge" and Dutch roll, forward and backward, with much laughter; for what exercise is so exhilarating to the young and strong as skating on smooth ice in pure, frosty air?

Eight o'clock came. The younger Stanbridges were despatched home with the baskets, and Edmund and his sisters walked towards the town with their friends. It was at the time of the great Evangelical Revival in the early seventies, and Friends as well as others were keenly interested in the various missions held.

Richard and Nannie were walking a little behind the rest, when she began eagerly: "Oh,

can you tell me how Mr. Blake's Mission at Lower Luxford Hall went off? You know, I have been away for months; but Papa would not have wished me to attend if I had been at home. He thinks these meetings are too sensational, but I can't help being interested. Claudia says there is nothing a real Friend ought to take exception to, and she and her brothers sing in the choir. Did you go to any of the meetings?"

"Yes," said Richard, "I went several evenings. The singing was beautiful, and Mr. Blake's sermons very eloquent and searching. But I could not feel in sympathy with the methods of the enquiry-room and the constant appeals to those who were being reached to confess their conversion, the publicity and the indecent exultation of the workers in counting heads. It seems to me," he went on thoughtfully, "that spiritual life is too sacred a thing to be touched so roughly, and the parable of the seed in stony places, that sprang up immediately, kept coming to my mind."

"It is our Friendly training," said Nannie. "I hate cant as much as anyone, yet it seems to me we lose by our inability to speak of that which is the real mainspring of our lives and conduct."

"Perhaps it is so. I never told even my dear

mother of my spiritual awakening, and now she is gone I feel what a joy it would have been to her if I had done it, but I was so afraid of making a profession and not living up to it."

"They tell me that all the churches are being revived by those who have been aroused by Mr. Blake, who professes to belong to no denomination. But one thing I overheard in the train I did not like—a gentleman said that the Missioner is such a handsome man and trades on his personal charm to make weak people do as he bids. It is sad to think some may think more of the messenger than of the message."

"I should not wonder if there is some truth in what was said, but no one can accuse *me* of having fallen into that snare," said Richard, laughing. "Do you remember that quaint little object, Ambrose Gell, coming to the old school?"

Nannie stood still in the snowy road. "Richard Clavering! Do you really mean that the Sunday he came was the great turning-point of life to you?"

"Yes," said Richard reverently; "it was through his faithful ministry that, like Christian, the burden rolled from my back at the sight of the Cross. It was a very real thing, young though I was."

"And I was younger—not fourteen; yet to me also that Sunday meant the lighting of a flame that has never died down in my heart. Why, Richard, we are sort of twins! How can we be thankful enough for that good little man's faithful message?"

They walked on, talking quietly, until they came to their friends waiting at the top of a hill where the roads branched to Upper and Lower Luxford.

"Come along, Nannie," said Claudia Welland; "we have just decided to sing a hymn before we separate."

It was a lonely place—no human habitation in sight; the white hills around silent and beautiful in the moonlight, when Claudia's high clear voice started a tune well known at that epoch:

We praise Thee, O God, for the Son of Thy love.

The dozen young voices joined in singing with hearty goodwill, if not very artistically. At the last verse—

We praise Thee, O God, for Thy Spirit of light,
Who has shown us our Saviour, and scattered our night—

Richard's right hand sought the little warm left one that hung near his side and gave it a firm pressure.

The last notes died away, cheery good-nights followed, and the three parties separated, the Stanbridges to return to their farm, the Wellands, Nannie, and a few more young people taking the road to Upper Luxford, while Richard alone made his way to the Lower town. His soul was strangely stirred. His had been a rather lonely life, mostly in the company of elder people, and the sense of spiritual companionship with this bright young creature was as sweet as it was new. When he had seen Ambrose Gell at Yearly Meeting, where he did *not* shine, he had felt almost ashamed to think of him as the one used of God to draw him to the fold, and now here was another instance of the true call of one who was neither mighty nor noble.

At supper, when he was describing the skating party to Mary Lake, who liked to hear all that was going on, she exclaimed: "Hannah Hamborough!—then her parents are back from their long visit to Torquay. How glad they will be at the First-day School! Edith Welland has taken the class, but she has not the gift that Hannah has of both pleasing and instructing the women—many of them older than herself."

"Ah—Hannah," said James Lake; "a truly valuable young Friend. Such a good daughter to her elderly parents, and she has

several times appeared in the ministry in our meetings most acceptably."

Richard was struck with the thought of his little schoolfellow's faithfulness to a service from which he still felt an unaccountable shrinking, although to his class he could speak bravely enough of the faith that was in him. From that time he constantly met Nannie—at Meeting, at Adult School gatherings, at the Essay Society, where they two, with Wellands, Stanbridges and other young Friends, met to read compositions which were supposed to be strictly anonymous, but any specially bright rhyme was always traced to Nannie's ready pen. She would come into the shop too, and chat in the friendliest way to the aproned young man who served her with a garden tool, a frying-pan, or a box of tintacks.

Richard was introduced to her rather stately parents, and was almost startled, and wholly sorry, to find what a spacious house and beautiful garden was the home of his friend, for before many weeks had passed he had to own to himself that he had fallen deeply in love with Nannie Hamborough, and that to win her would be his greatest earthly happiness.

But would her parents give their only child to one who was but a junior partner in an ironmonger's shop? Would Nannie herself

feel it gave sufficient scope for her abilities? Would not she feel her first duty was to her parents, who were both nearly sixty years of age? All through the summer and autumn Richard waited, happy in every moment of frank and friendly intercourse that came in his way—miserably doubtful if she, and her father, would ever consent to a nearer relationship.

At last one winter evening, when he knew that Mrs. Hamborough and her daughter were away, he ventured to call, and to his surprise was kindly received by the white-haired old man, who listened to Richard's honest, manly account of his deep affection for Nannie and his fears that her father would not feel his business position worthy of her.

"We are in no hurry to part with our one ewe lamb," said Isaac Hamborough thoughtfully; "but her mother and I have often felt how lonely she will be when we are called hence, if she makes no fresh ties. I may tell thee, Richard Clavering, that I have guessed enough of thy feeling for her to make some enquiries as to thy character and conduct, which have quite satisfied me. We care more for an honest, loving husband, who is a Friend, for her, than for worldly position. If thou canst win her (and my Hannah Maria is worth the winning), we shall be quite content. But do not hurry her, my lad—she has not

known thee for many months—the school acquaintance counts for nothing"; and with a kindly farewell he dismissed Richard, who walked back to the Lower town as if treading on air, hardly able to believe that his wooing had the blessing of the alarming parent.

Christmas passed, and early in January came a hard frost. Guessing that skating would be going on, Richard walked to the mere, finding only some village children sliding on the lower end and a solitary figure in a sealskin cap standing doubtfully on the edge.

"Oh, Richard, I am so glad to see someone else. The Wellands were prevented from coming at the last minute, and I cannot think what has become of the Stanbridges, but I daresay they will be here soon. Papa always made me promise I would never go on the ice alone, for fear of accident."

Richard buckled on her skates and then his own, and just as they were rising, Edmund Stanbridge's voice came to them from a respectful distance: "No skating for us to-day—those troublesome brats of ours are in bed with measles, and as we have none of us had it, mother says we must lie low for fear of giving it to some of you."

Richard and Nannie suitably expressed their sympathy, and then skimmed off to the smoother ice in the centre of the mere.

Edmund looked after them ruefully. "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good—I suppose *that's* settled. Well, old Dick is one of the best, and she would have never looked at a rough chap like me;" and the good fellow shouldered his burden and tramped back to his farm.

So Richard, as they slowly skated side by side, had the fullest opportunity of telling Nannie of his love. To her first exclamation, "Oh, papa and mamma could never spare me," he had the ready answer. Tears came into her bright eyes. "How unselfish they are!" she said; this difficulty removed, she was ready sweetly to respond, and to own that her feeling of hearty friendship and respect might very easily take a warmer colour. With crossed hands they skated on, soberly talking of the double life of service they must give to the Heavenly Master Who had called them on the same day at the old School. When twilight fell they walked back to Nannie's home, and were so kindly received that Richard resolved to be the best of sons to the couple, who were willing to trust their treasure to his keeping.

Before another skating season Nannie was reigning as mistress in the old-fashioned rooms over the shop, and entering heartily into all Richard's plans for the good of his neighbours

and the world at large. Talents grow with the using, and in after years a bonnie flock of little ones was often left in grandmamma's charge, while Richard and Nannie went here and there exercising their helpful ministry.

One summer evening they were visiting a Meeting House in the suburbs of London, and being early they wandered round the large graveyard, with many nameless green mounds and a few low tombstones, just alike for rich and poor. On one of these they found a familiar name: "Ambrose Gell, aged 67," and the date of a few years back.

"That good, faithful man of one talent!" said Richard. "Do you know, Nannie, that I almost wish he had had the encouragement of knowing that his visit to the school was not in vain? It seems hard to have worked on in faith, and never to know——"

"I think he knows now," said Nannie softly.

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